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THE
GRIZZLY-HUNTERS.

OR,
THE NAVAHOE CAPTIVES.

A TALE OF THE LOST CITY OF THE SIERRAS

BY FREDERICK WHITTAKER.

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THE GRIZZLY-HUNTERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE JAGUAR.

A FINE jaguar stood at the foot of an immense tree, that sheltered the birth of an infant stream. The tree stood at the entrance of a deep gloomy gorge, that opened up into the heart of the mountains. All around they towered, rising up in grand precipices behind the solitary tree, and hiding from view the tiny stream that trickled through the moss down a long chasm in the rocks.

To look at the lofty walls of black basalt that inclosed it, you would never have dreamed that that little innocent stream had cut its way unaided through those hard rocks. And yet, wonderful to say, it was so

The stream had been thousands of years making its resting-place, and now it stole peacefully along.

Diverging chasms swept away on every side, and through their broad gates you could see the blue sky and the distant plains, far, far below. Turning to look up the great rift in the hills, the white peaks of the upper sierra were clearly visible, cutting the blue sky sharply.

The stream must have rested at its present level for many hundred years, for the size of the solitary tree implied a great age.

There it stood, gigantic and gloomy, the sentinel of ages. And underneath its shade stood the jaguar, gazing down the course of one of the radiating chasms to the south-east. The bright fierce sun beat on the mountain side, lighting up the gorges, and reflected back from the rocks, till every clinging lichen wilted and quivered in the fierce heat.

Only under the huge tree was there coolness and verdure and the jaguar seemed to appreciate the fact.

There he stood, the sunlight peeping through the rustling, shining leaves, overhead, and playing on his brilliant skin, where the swelling muscles stood out in bold relief. The golden gleams flecked the tawny hide with dashes of brilliant light, lighting up the rosettes of velvety black, so symmetrically disposed on the rich orange ground.

His fierce eyes shone out, bright green, with the thin black line of pupil in the center, and his face was set in grim watchfulness, as he gazed. Evidently the jaguar saw something, as he stood, slowly waving his tail to and fro, and gazing intently down the wild, rugged rift.

Far away, at the bottom of the gorge, in the bed of one of the mountain torrents, now dry and dusty, but leading up to the sentinel tree, was a solitary horseman, slowly advancing.

The keen eye of the jaguar could see that both horse and rider were wearied out. The animal could hardly drag one foot before the other, but it pricked up its ears and hobbled forward, when it caught sight of the tree. The rider threw himself from the horse, and walked ahead, to ease the animal.

The jaguar's eyes gleamed with fierce desire, and he crept back behind the trunk of the tree, as softly as if he trod on velvet. The wind was blowing up from below, and he well knew that his prey would not catch the scent. He hid himself in a sort of natural cavern, formed by the great gnarled roots of the tree, where the soil had wasted away under the action of the water, and waited, with all the still patience of the feline tribe, for his quarry.

Presently the loose stones, clattering below, announced the hoofs of the horse, approaching. The jaguar settled himself for a spring, his tail slowly waving back and forth.

Horse and rider came into sight, and toiled up to the head of the stream.

The horse was a splendid animal, nearly thoroughbred, of a bright bay color; but his gaunt flanks and staring hip-bones showed that he had lately suffered great privations. The horse equipments were magnificent, in the Mexican fashion, being covered with embossed leather, and studded with silver nails, wherever there was a chance for ornament. The master

was a small, slender-framed man, richly dressed in black velvet, as a ranchero, with a profusion of gold buttons and embroidery on his garments. His face was remarkably beautiful and classic in outline, but wan and haggard. He wore his bright golden hair long, and curling over his shoulders. In his sash were two handsomely-mounted revolvers.

Horse and rider eagerly rushed to the spring, to quench their thirst, and drank deep draughts in silence. Then the man raised his head for the first time, and as he did so, instinctively uttered a shout. It was answered by the roar of the jaguar; and the next moment, the glittering body of the fierce mountain king flew through the air, and the man was borne to the ground with the rush. The terrified horse rushed away with a squeal of terror, and the jaguar stood over his prey.

The impetus of the spring and the weight of the animal had stunned the man, and when the beast seized him by the arm, it was some moments ere he opened his eyes. When he did, he seemed to be insensible to pain, as he gazed dreamily up into the fierce face of the jaguar. The merciful provision of Providence, that deprives a death at the hands of a wild beast of half its terrors, spread its ægis over him now. And yet he was perfectly conscious of his position as he lay there.

But he felt as if he had taken chloroform, and could feel the teeth of the great cat in his flesh, without being sensible of pain.

Suddenly the jaguar rose to his feet. He patted the prostrate form gently with his paw, and tried to roll it over, as if in play.

Then he walked away a step or two, and turned his head.

But the man knew better than to move.

The silly mouse tries to escape. The cat enjoys the fun of catching it again and again. This man was cool and brave beyond most men. He lay perfectly still.

Only his eyes, wide open, watched the great cat, as it slowly prowled around him, now and then patting him softly, as if to try to rouse him.

But his right hand stole slowly down to his sash, an inch at a time, every time the jaguar looked away from him.

At last the animal caught sight of the movement, and erected its back, leaping up in the air, and bounding around the poor fellow with horrible playfulness. The man knew that it was about to spring again, and snatched out one of his pistols, throwing up the already battered left arm to shield himself.

The great cat pounced on him again, and seized the wounded arm in its teeth, while both fore-paws lay on the man's chest.

The victim lay perfectly still, and his tormentor seemed puzzled. It allowed the wounded arm to be quiet in its mouth, while the great, green eyes gazed fiercely down into the blue orbs of the man.

The man lay still, and looked steadily back. Then the eyes of the great cat slowly closed. The soul, that intangible spirit, the breath of life from the Almighty, looked down the fierce ignorance of the brute's glare with the light of reason.

The man began to cock the pistol.

It was a terrible job to accomplish, unnoticed. The great cat, lying on its victim, with eyes closed, still felt the almost imperceptible tension of the muscles. It gave a low, savage, rattling growl, and the man felt the great claws enter his breast, and lacerate the flesh, while the white teeth were bared, and the jaguar crunched his arm.

But, while it tore and crunched, its attention was taken up for a moment, and the sharp click of the lock told that the pistol was cocked.

The jaguar heard the sound and started up, still holding the left arm. The terrible beast raised one paw, to punish the audacity of its victim.

But the cool, rapid decision of the man, told him that now was his time.

Half raising himself to look in the jaguar's face, he gave a shout, which startled the beast for one instant.

The great cat dropped his paw, still retaining the arm, and started back, drawing up his victim to a sitting posture, and growling savagely, his green eyes glaring into the man's eyes.

The man put the pistol up against the chin of the jaguar, pointing diagonally upward. There was a flash and a report.

The wild beast dropped at the flash, struck through the spinal column, stone dead.

The mechanical contraction of the distended claws tore open the man's breast in a series of great gashes, but the animal dropped powerless on the instant.

The jaws relaxed, the body heaved mechanically two or three times, and all was still.

A deep groan of intense agony burst from the lips of the wounded man, now for the first time sensible of pain. He slowly withdrew his arm from the jaws of the dead jaguar, and staggered up to his feet. No sooner had he done so, than every thing turned dark around him. The great tree waved up and down, the rocks shook and trembled, and seemed to go round and round, and the poor fellow stumbled, and fell prone over the body of the jaguar. He had fainted.

How long he lay there, he never knew. When he came to his senses, the hot sun was glaring fiercely down on him, parching out his life, as it seemed.

He raised himself slowly, and with difficulty. The intense and agonizing thirst that comes of desperate wounds was on him, as he crawled to the spring. He lay down there, and swallowed deep draughts of the cool water, that tasted like nectar. It seemed to give him fresh strength, for he sat up and looked around him.

Far down the gorge, to the south-west, where the little stream flowed so silently, he could see his horse, cropping the turf in security.

The wounded man examined his arm. It had almost stopped bleeding, and felt terribly stiff and sore. The wounds on his body were not deep, but they had already cost him more blood than he could afford to lose. He felt as weak as a child, and gave way entirely, as he looked around at the desolate scene.

"Oh! my God!" he moaned; "have I escaped all the perils of the wilderness, savage Indians and more ferocious whites, only to die from loss of blood, under the claws of a wild beast?"

He sat under the tree, uncertain what to do.

While he hesitated, the sound of horses' hoofs struck on his ear. In that wild spot it could be but one thing.

"Indians!" he muttered, faintly. "Well. As well die one way as another."

He turned his head slowly.

A long file of mounted Indians were descending the ravine above him, and coming straight toward him.

The wounded man laid his head down on the body of the jaguar, and waited in silence.

CHAPTER II.

THE NAVAHOES.

THE file of Indians, about three hundred in number, came trooping down the gorge at an easy pace, half-walk, half-amble. They came from a north-easterly direction, showing that they had crossed one of the upper passes of the Sierra Mimbres. The solitary tree that they were approaching lay at the head-waters of a little river, known to the Spaniards as the Rio de los Mimbres, in the south-western corner of New Mexico, almost an unknown land even now.

After leaving the central valley of that territory, in which lie Santa Fé and Albuquerque, all the land to the west is a mysterious region, sacred to the Apaches and Navajos, (or Navahoes) from time immemorial.

No white man dare set his foot there; and, from its secret fastnesses, issue forth periodically those wild bands, who revenge the slaughters of Cortes on the degenerate descendants of the conquerors, and carry their raids into the heart of Mexico, till the city of Durango, a thousand miles distant, trembles at the sound of their war-whoop.

The eagle glance of the leading Indian had detected the wounded man, long before the latter saw him. But the band never altered their pace, as they slowly advanced, till they halted around the tree.

Then the latter waved his arm, uttering some words in an unknown tongue, and the band filed past him down the stream, where they disposed themselves to water their horses.

The wounded ranchero opened his eyes, and beheld the leader close to him, regarding him gravely.

He saw a tall, powerfully-built man, lean and sinewy, with long black hair streaming down on either side of his face, and flowing down his back, till it fell all over the horse's croup. Many a fashionable lady would have given large sums to have possessed such magnificent hair. It shone in the sun with blue reflections, and was treated with the utmost care.

A circlet of gold sustained a coronet of feathers, and kept the long locks out of his face. A large striped cloak, or *serapé*, for which the Navahoes are famous, covered the rest of his dress; but his arm, bare except for a broad gold bracelet, emerged from the folds of the cloak, holding a long lance.

He was splendidly mounted, as were all the rest of the band. Their horses were speckled and spotted with various colors, and of that untiring Southern breed of mustangs, that so closely resembles the Arabian.

The chief regarded him for some moments in silence, the wounded man never moving. At last he addressed him in broken Spanish:

"Who are you?" he asked, in a deep, guttural voice.

"An American," answered the other, quietly.

"Whence come you?" pursued the chief.

"From Texas."

The chief made a movement of interest. He had only dealt with degenerated whites and mongrel Mexicans all his life. He was surprised to see a Texan.

"How do they call you at home?"

"Gilmore," said the wounded man, faintly. He began to feel sick and weak in the hot sun.

The chief repeated the name several times, and then tapped his own breast:

"Quahtemoczin," he said, with an accent of great dignity
"Cacique of Flalotla."

Gilmore smiled faintly, and inclined his head in greeting. Quahtemoczin pursued his interrogatories:

"Did you kill that tiger?"

"I did," answered Gilmore; "but not before he sprung on me unawares. See"

And he showed his wounded arm, and the gashes on his breast.

The chief swung himself off his black horse in an instant,

and looked at the wounds. Then he turned round and called out some words, in a strange language, that seemed to be formed of gutturals and liquids, with very few vowels. Gilmore listened attentively, but could not recognize any words except "Quetzalcoatl," "Flalotla" and "Katapetl." The rest seemed to be hardly articulate to his uninstructed ear.

Several men advanced at the word; and one of them, an old Indian with long gray hair, produced from a bag several bandages of cotton, with which he proceeded to bind the wounds of the white man. Whatever might have been the old Indian's education, he certainly made an excellent surgeon. The broken bones of the left arm were neatly set, and placed in splints of bark, the chest wounds were washed and bound up, and the wounded man was soon made as comfortable as circumstances permitted.

He tried to stand up then, but was entirely unable. The cacique motioned to him to stay quiet in the shade. Two of the Indians set to work at the jaguar, and had his skin off in a very few moments.

While Gilmore was wondering what was to be done with him after all this delay, the bellowing of cattle struck his ear. It came from the pass, down which the Indians had come.

Quahtemoczin shouted out some words in his strange tongue, and a quickly-improvised horse-litter made its appearance. It consisted of two of the long lances borne by the warriors, with a *serapé* fastened between them, the whole secured between two horsemen, one behind the other. The wounded man was lifted into this, and moved off, just as the advance-guard of a great herd of cattle came tramping and bellowing down the gorge, driven by wild-looking Indians, with long lances.

Gilmore comprehended at once that the Indians were returning from one of their great raids, but from what direction he could not tell, whether New Mexico or Mexico. The whole band now set off, down the course of the stream, in a south-westerly direction, leaving the cattle to be watered.

The litter followed, and the captive, for such he felt himself to be, saw his horse being led along in the column.

Soon after they started, one of the Indians brought him

several thin cakes of a light blue color, which at first he hesitated to touch. The Indian made signs to eat them, and he found them to be quite pleasant in taste, resembling buckwheat. The strength they gave him was very grateful, weak as he was.

No one spoke to him. He could see the chief riding on ahead down the grim-looking gorge, till all of a sudden he turned to the right, and seemed to disappear into the bowels of the rocks.

The long procession followed him, and successively disappeared; and finally the horse-litter arrived at the same place. And then Gilmore recognized that peculiarity of structure, that makes the Rocky Mountains and the whole of the great West so wonderful, the existence of cañons.

The one in question was a narrow perpendicular fissure in the rocks, whose walls, beginning in black basalt, went sheer up through all the different strata, the passage between being the dry bed of a torrent.

This wild and ragged-looking passage wound slowly upward; a bed of black sand, strewn with loose stones, forming a convenient floor for the horses' feet.

The whole band rode on at an easy amble, the path sloping upward, and winding around to the north-west. After two miles of this, it became so narrow that there was barely room for a single horse to pass. The rocks overhead shot up, and seemed to meet together almost, while a dim twilight pervaded the black cañon. At last they appeared to be entering a vast archway, for the light grew dimmer and dimmer.

Gilmore looked up, and the heaven was no longer visible. The grim rocks met together overhead.

The echoes of the horse-hoofs reverberated in thunder-tones through this lofty natural archway. Thousands of wild pigeons, disturbed from their nest in some crevices of the rocks above, went whirring and fluttering about. Clouds of them flashed across the white shaft of light in front, and soared away to freedom.

Presently the opening drew nearer and nearer. The long file drew slowly cut, and the captive beheld the light of day.

He found the band crossing an amphitheater in the mountains, surrounded by lofty peaks. A broad, dark gorge, at the further end of the amphitheater, seemed to lead up still higher into the mountains, and toward this their march was tending. Gilmore looked around him with interest and astonishment, for he observed that the face of the rocks around the amphitheater was all covered with sculpture. Gigantic bas-reliefs, with figures from fifty to sixty feet in height, decorated a flat surface of rock, evidently smoothed by the hand of man in former ages.

Another thing surprised him. The ground was all honey-combed with shafts, as if mining had been common here at one time, and rough specimens of copper ore were lying around plentifully.

But he had no time to make remarks on the deserted mine, for the whole cavalcade pursued its march across the valley, and entered the opposite gorge.

This proved to be, as usual, the dry bed of a torrent, broad and rugged. They had passed the primitive region of Plutonic rocks, and entered on the old red sandstone.

They swept along now at a fast walk, and toiled up the ravine, for several hours, getting higher and higher, till they reached at last what seemed to be the summit of a pass.

On either side of them two lofty peaks towered away to the sky; but before them the mountain side sloped downward once more, and a lovely rolling green prairie stretched itself out at the foot for miles.

From the height at which they paused, they could see all the way across this prairie, to where in the faint, dim distance the indented outline of a second range or sierra was visible.

But Gilmore well knew how many miles they would have to cross before those hills would be reached.

The prisoner turned on his stretcher to look back, and beheld the straggling herd of cattle close behind, with the drivers goading them along. Suddenly the chief, Quahtemoczin, shouted out some orders in his strange language, pointing to the summit of the mountain. The captive looked. A dark bank of clouds was gathering there, and already the distant mutterings of thunder were audible.

He had only a moment to look. Suddenly, and almost without warning, the storm swooped down on them, wrapped in its black mantle of cloud, darting its fiery lances in all directions around, and into the midst of them, and pouring out torrents of rain.

The whole band, with all their spoils, was put to flight in one moment by the resistless power of the elements. Horse and drivers, away they went down the mountain, at the full speed of their frightened animals. Poor Gilmore, in his rude hammock litter, was compelled to cling to the side of the rough conveyance, with his sound arm, to save himself from being thrown out.

Inside of five minutes every thing was dark from the thickness of the clouds, only illumined by the red glare of the lightning. The loud, splitting report of the thunder was never out of their ears, as flash and streak was followed by crash and peal. The confusion of yells and cries, with the hoarse bellowing of the frightened cattle, united to make a Babel of sounds perfectly deafening. Poor Gilmore expected every moment to be dashed to pieces. His shattered arm pained him intensely, but he managed to save it from further injury during the wild race. At last he felt that they had reached a more level ground, the descent being more gradual. They had come to the foot of the mountain, and were galloping out to the plain.

And as they did so, they began to emerge from the storm. The rain fell slower, and the light increased. The flashes of electricity no longer darted around them, and the thunder, left behind, went muttering and groaning away among the gorges of the mountains.

At the same time the two mounted Navahoes, who bore the wounded prisoner between them, slackened their pace to a walk, and gave the poor fellow much ease.

Gilmore was only too glad to lie back exhausted.

He could see the whole body of the herd, with the Indians dashing around it at full speed, trying to head it, and resembling so many sheep-dogs.

While he gazed, the rain ceased, as suddenly as it had begun. The sun shone out overhead with scorching power. The clouds were already gathered once more, all around the

summit of the mountain. The only token that remained of the storm was the rumbling of the thunder in the distance, and a brown rivulet, in which the horses sunk knee deep, which rushed down the middle of the pass and spread out in the prairie below.

With the lulling of the storm the stampede of the cattle ceased. Wearied out as they were, they soon reduced their pace to a walk, stopping to crop the luxuriant herbage of the prairie.

And now Gilmore, who was thoroughly exhausted, saw with delight that the whole band was making preparations to halt.

Quahtemoczin was conspicuous on his black stallion, ordering matters in all directions. The horses were unsaddled and picketed at the end of long lassoes, and Indians began bustling about to start fires and go into camp.

His own bearers had just halted, and dismounted, and the wounded man was preparing to struggle painfully out of his hammock, when a sudden yell arose from the midst of the camp.

Gilmore looked round.

The Indian chief had dispatched scouting parties in several directions around the camp. One of these was to be seen, galloping toward camp, in hot pursuit of a single man who fled before them. Gilmore trembled with excitement, as he recognized that the stranger was a *white man*. He was of immense stature, and wore a tremendous black beard and long hair. He was mounted on a big, heavy-looking horse. As he galloped away from his foes, he looked behind him every now and then, and the Indians gained on him fast.

Suddenly the Texan saw him pull up his horse, and turn. He had caught sight of the camp. He bore in his hand a rifle of immense size, which he raised to his shoulder.

There was a flash, and a very heavy report. One of the pursuing Indians dropped from his horse, and the rest faltered.

The stranger, single-handed, dashed at the whole crowd, over a dozen, all told. Gilmore saw his form in the midst of them, with the great rifle swung aloft. It rose and fell with terrible effect.

The Indians bore back from the force of his blows, and there seemed to be a prospect of escape for the stranger, when Quahtemoczin's voice was heard, shouting out some orders. Forty or fifty Indians were mounted, and scouring after the unknown in a moment.

At their head was the cacique or chief himself, with the coils of a lasso swinging in his hand. The whole squadron rapidly closed in upon the strange hunter, who was beating back his antagonists with his fearful blows, but losing time.

Gilmore saw the Indians scatter from before him, while he galloped away at last, apparently unharmed. But, just when he seemed out of danger, the black coils of the lasso flew through the air. In a moment, despite all his size and strength, the giant was caught, or rather snatched from his saddle, as if he had been a child, and dragged into camp at the tail of Quahtemoczin's horse, a helpless captive.

There were two white prisoners for the Navahoes.

CHAPTER III.

THE FENIAN CHIEF.

ABOUT a week after the occurrences just related, two men sat opposite to each other, in a large, gloomy hall, built of stone, whose walls were covered with bas-reliefs of a strange and grotesque character. This wall was pierced with low doorways, here and there. Looking through them, you perceived that the building was erected on the top of a mound with a level plateau around it, commanding a view of a large valley, shut in by lofty snow-capped mountains. The valley was over thirty miles in length, and about twenty across. The center was occupied by a lake, in the midst of which stood the mound building. The ground appeared to be well cultivated, and laid out in large fields and gardens. The whole valley was dotted with white buildings, and several pyramidal mounds, crowned with low, white temples, could be seen from where they sat. Canoes were flying about the lake, and every thing looked happy and prosperous.

But the two men in the temple hall appeared to be much cast down and gloomy.

The one was Gilmore, his wounds neatly dressed, and reclining on a mat. The other was a man of the most formidable personal appearance. He must have stood nearly six feet eight inches in his stockings. He was framed as near to the model of the Farnese Hercules, as it is given to human nature to approach. His face was dark and aquiline in contour, of the most refined type; and his waves of hair and beard, both of jetty blackness, were simply marvelous. His dress was a sort of mingling of the buck-skin of the mountain hunter, with the cloth and linen of civilization.

"Me little friend," he was saying, with as strong an Irish accent as is often heard, "we're in a divil of a bad way, and I'm not denyin' it. But there niver was a black cloud without a silver lining, and the blessed saints, (more power to them!) can get us out of this, if they want to."

"If I was only strong again, and had my pistols, I wouldn't care," returned the other, gloomily; "but that cursed chief of theirs has both of them, and I'm not good for much alone, wounded and unarmed."

The giant smiled kindly.

"Me poor little friend!" he said; "I know how ye feel. Wasn't I the same way meself once, whin I was in the dirty Maidstone prison, an' me down wid the typhus fever an' six wounds? Sure I couldn't stir hand or foot for three months, an' the ould blackguard of a Governor, he comes in with the doctor one fine morning, an' says he: 'Sure it's a pity he's goin' to l'ave us, doctor. It's the illigant figure he'd make dancin' on nothin'.' An' with that I was so tearin' savage, that I speaks up, wake as I was, an' says I: 'Ye lie, ye ould divil! I'll live to chate ye, an' all the bloody Sassenachs, or me name's not Rory O'Donnell.' An' I kept my word, little one."

"What were you put in for, Captain O'Donnell?" asked the other, in a tone of faint interest.

"Och! 'Asy enough, jewel. Ye see we had a bit of a risin' in Ireland, off in Tipperary, an' the bloody thieves o' police an' sodgers was too much for us, an' it's me belief that that blackgaird Stevens sold us, body an' bones, for British gold."

"But how did you get put into prison?"

"Sure an' I was taken prisoner by the sodgers. Not afore I'd brained five of them wid one of their own muskets, though. But they put two balls through me chest, bruk one arm wid a musket-butt, an' gave me three prods of a bayonet, all in the shindy; an' the end of it was that I fell down from loss of blood, an' the dirty thieves got atop of me, an' put the irons on me. I had to lie in bed nearly six months, afore I was well enough to sit up an' be tried, in a British coort, for *tr'ason*. D'ye mind that now? Tr'ason to fight on me own land ag'in' the Sassenachs, whin the O'Donnells were kings in Ireland before Johnny Bull was heard of!"

"But I am anxious to hear how you got out, captain."

"I'll tell ye, me little friend. When I was tried, there was a divil of a crowd. All the papers had out: 'That terrible ruffian, the Fenian ringleader, Roderick O'Donnell, is to be tried for high-treason to-day.' An' wasn't there a crowd? Whin the attorney-gineral read out the indictment to me, i, was full of tr'ason, tr'ason, tr'ason. The ould judge he asked me was I guilty, an' I answered up, says I: 'If that damned, lyin' spalpeen of a lawyer there, will stand up to his words like a man, I'll take him, an' his junior counsel, an' the judge, an' the sheriff, one down an' the other come on; an' I'll soon show ye, ye spalpeen, if I'm guilty or not.' An' thin the judge he couldn't see that; so he tould me to hould my prate, while I was bein' tried; an' purty soon they found me guilty, and sintinced me to be hung by the neck till I was dead. 'Divil a bit,' thinks I; but I says nothing. The hangin' was put off for a couple of months, an' in the mane time, bedad, who should come to see me, but old Colonel Shields, as had been my colonel in the ould Irish brigade, when ye had yer war here; an' he gives me a crucifix, as he'd had blessed by the Pope's own self, he said—divil a lie—an' says he: 'May it console ye, O'Donnell, in the hour of trial.' 'Thank ye, colonel,' says I. An' with that he winked one eye, so's the jailer niver saw him, an' he goes away. An' wi' that I got mighty religious all of a sudden—God forgive me—an' I took to prayin' reg'lar over the crucifix, an' turnin' it over, an' at last I found some little saws hid away in it.

"Well, honey, to make a long story short, I got out of the prison windy, a wake before I was hung, so I wasn't hung at all; an' I got aboard an American vessel to New York, an' arrived safe. An' now tell me, me little friend, how did ye git among thim Indians, an' who are ye, any way?"

Gilmore sighed.

"I am a man, Captain O'Donnell, who, ever since I arrived at man's estate, has been compelled to fight for his life among a den of ruffians. You see how small I am. Judge, then, among a nation of fighting desperadoes, as in Texas, what must have been my fate! When I was young I taught music. I disarmed hostility by politeness, and my voice made me friends, even in Texas. But at last a ruffian was found, whom no politeness could disarm. Captain O'Donnell, I was walking in the streets of Houston, with my affianced bride, a lovely Mexican girl. I thought she loved me. I believe she did. Sir, this great brute, half-drunk, approached us both, shoved me into the kennel with one hand, and kissed Anita in the open street. God of heaven! I go mad now when I think of it."

"And what did ye do to the spalpeen?" asked O'Donnell.

"I was a fool. I own it. I forgot that he could crush me with one hand. I only remembered the insult. I sprung at the ruffian like a wild-cat, and fastened on him with teeth and claws. I actually bore him back an instant in my frenzy, and tore a mouthful of flesh from him."

The Irishman seized the other by the sound hand.

"Me boy, ye did right. Av I'd only been there, I'd have thrashed the coward meself. Sure ye poor little divils hav hard enough time in the world, without being bullied by the big fellows. Ye got licked, of coorse, but ye did what ye could."

"Yes, captain. I did get beaten, and badly, too. The man Austin caught me by my long hair, and held me at arm's length, while he battered me and kicked me. Not satisfied with that, he beat me with a huge ox-whip, and left me in the streets for dead."

"An' how did ye git off?"

"I lay there, alone and unpitied, for hours. Anita, perfi-

dious devil, when she saw me conquered, went off with my conqueror."

O'Donnell stroked his black beard reflectively.

"Women are the divil!" he ejaculated; "from Helen of Troy, who went back to Menelaus after he'd kilt Paris down to the Impress Catherine of Roosia, they're the divil. There niver was a spalpeen of a man, if he was big, that didn't have his hands full of thim. Ain't Rory O'Donnell an instance, me darlin'? Sure an' I c'u'dn't count the various pretty cr'atures that has made overtures to me, in me time. But how did ye get off at last?"

"When night came, I managed to stagger home, or rather crawl there. I got to my lonely little room, and laid down. I was bruised and sore from head to foot, and lay there for over a month, before I could go out. I was all alone. Every one shunned and derided me—and why? Because I was not strong. But I had learned one lesson from my beating. I was not a coward. I had actually thought I was. I had been so scorned by every one before, whether good-naturedly or the reverse. As soon as I got well I sold all my goods, and left Houston. I bought a pair of revolvers and a horse, and I rode off into the country. I found a solitary place where I lived for several months, doing nothing all day but practice pistol-shooting. All my money was laid out in ammunition and arms, and at last I felt that I could hold my own. I would put up a row of sticks, each with a silver dime on its top, take out my watch, allowing two seconds per shot, and empty five six-barreled revolvers inside of one minute, at each shot sending the dimes flying at twenty paces distance."

"Oh, murder!" cried O'Donnell; "ye don't mane it. Ye're jokin'."

"I mean it, and I am in earnest," said the other, quietly.

"Then ye're either the divil himself or Little Gilmore," said O'Donnell, excitedly; "for I never heard of but one man as c'u'd shoot like that, outside o' Wild Bill."

"I *am* Little Gilmore," said the other, with a smile. "I am glad that you have heard of me, Captain O'Donnell. It will save me boasting. I became a gambler and a desperado, as you know."

"Know?" echoed O'Donnell; "why I've heard of ye as the most desperate little divil in all Texas. They told me at Austin as how ye laid out three fellows as came for ye."

"Oh! that was nothing," said Gilmore; "they were all excited, and firing wild. You know that it is by no means difficult to shoot at a target, but if the target can fire back it alters the case."

"Ye may say that, me boy. But tell me, Gilmore, how is it that you got out here, in the power of these divils?"

"Simple enough," returned the other. "A few months ago I found Tom Austin, and shot him dead. Well and good, so far. But, when I returned to Galveston and Houston, I found that in my absence a formidable band of men, known as the 'Black Watch' had monopolized the faro tables all through Texas. Every one of them was sworn to avenge his brothers. They proposed to me to join their brotherhood, but I had traveled alone too long to consort with a lot of ruffians like them. I refused. The deputation sent to me went away with scowling looks. That night I went to the principal faro bank of Houston, and offered to play at one of the tables. There were plenty of strangers in the room, all of whom were treated civilly by the gamblers, in order to get them to play, but I was refused admittance to one of the tables by the banker. 'We don't want cheats here,' he said, when I asked him what he meant. Then there was a free fight. I shot the banker, and the 'Black Watch' went for me. How I got out I don't know now. It was the first time in my life I was in a hurry."

"And divil blame ye," observed O'Donnell, dryly.

"Well, sir, I got out somehow, and ran to my horse. I was just on his back, when all the devils came running out after me, firing at me. But, bah!—a dark night and a drunken crew don't make sure shooting. I got off unhurt and galloped west. I found, after a little, that they were following me in force. I had to ride for my life for nearly a week. They roused the country on me, and every one was out to catch the 'murderer, Little Gilmore.' Give a dog a bad name, you know. Well, they gave me such a name that I had to leave Texas, and I resolved to try an overland route through Arizona to get to California."

"And a swate time ye've had on yer trip!" said O'Donnell, dryly. "If we ain't as pretty a pair of nnocents as were iver hatched!"

"Well, captain," said Gilmore, "but you haven't told me how it is that you come here, you know. You only told me how you reached New York."

O'Donnell gave him a peculiar smile.

"Sure, and I hardly know myself. I thought I'd like to take a trip to the mountains to see the Navahoes. Ye see, I've always been a great reader, and I remember all about the way that old villain Cortes treated the poor Aztecs. He roasted them on gridirons and stole all their gold and silver, and made slaves of them. Well, some of them were cowards, but some of them got away, and came up to these mountains. And the Navahoes and Apaches are payin' up the Spaniards now. Sure, I always thought they had a city hidden away somewhere about here, and now I know it."

Gilmore looked with surprise at the other.

In the warmth of conversation the Fenian chief dropped his comical pronunciation almost entirely, and the tones of his voice were those of a refined and educated man. Every moment he let drop some careless expression, that revealed him to be a man of great attainments. Gilmore was puzzled to find him where he was.

"Well, Captain O'Donnell, he said, at last, "since you know all about these Navahoes, perhaps you can tell me what they are going to do with us?"

O'Donnell lapsed into his droll accent and dry way at once. He gave a quizzical grin as he said:

"They're goin' to fatten us both up with the best of chickens and praties, if they have any, till we get as tinder as thim fat little pigs ye'll see trottin' around up by the Central Park ye see. And then they'll sound a big drum some fine mornin', and all the divils 'll get together, and they'll come here in their canoes and make a grand hullabaloo."

"And what for, in the name of Heaven?" asked Gilmore, a shade of anxiety in his tones.

"And thin they'll sing hymns to the great war-god of the Aztecs, Quetzalcoatl, and they'll dress up in white, and take us up to the biggest of the timplos in Tlalotla."

"What for?" asked Gilmore, anxiously.

"To ate us," was the quiet reply, with a broad grin.

There was a short silence. Then Gilmore broke out:

"Impossible, captain. There are no cannibals among the North American Indians."

"Perhaps not many," said O'Donnell, peacefully; "but if my r'adin' and exparience are not grately at fault, the ancient Aztecs used to make iligant little dinners now and thin, & which they invited their fri'nds to a boiled young man, an' a roast young woman, an' a pappoose pie, wi' the toes stickin' out."

Gilmore shuddered. The Fenian dropped the lid of his left eye, almost imperceptibly, and tranquilly continued:

"Sure, an' Clavijero says they'd smack their lips over a bit of roast Spaniard, stuffed with bananas, for all the world as if it was roast turkey. They used to like Spaniards in thim days; but sure an' a body must have variety, an' I suppose they think that a little fricasseed Texan, with golden hair, would be acciptable for a change, not to spake of a mouthful of O'Donnell pie. An ould Feejee prince once tould me that there was a sort of a game flavor about an Irishman, quite delicious. 'Ye see, Mr. O'Donnell,' says he to me—more power to us, we was both blind drunk at the time—says he, 'I think as how it must be that iligant whisky as they drink, as gives 'em the flavor.' The ould thief knew the whisky well enough, bedad."

"Captain O'Donnell," said Gilmore, "you're a very cool hand, but you don't mean to tell me that seriously?"

The Fenian chief gave a droll look at Gilmore. The latter evidently did not relish the joke.

"Sure an' ye needn't be alarmed," he said; "they don't ate Christians as a regular male. It's only whin they catch a white captive, as they make a feast to their war-god Quetzalcoatl. We'll have the comfort of bein' 'aten with all the ceremony in the world, an' of furnishin' a dacent faste to the brave descindants of Mōctezuma."

"Oh, stop, O'Donnell!" the other cried; "remember, I'm all shaken to pieces yet, with the mauling that jaguar gave me. Wait till I get well, and then we'll see what we can do to escape."

"Escape!" echoed O'Donnell. "Sure an' I ain't a-goin' to escape at all."

"What do you mean?" asked the Texan, peevishly. "Don't tease me, O'Donnell. I'm all weak and feverish to-day."

"Sure and I mane what I say," answered the giant, coolly. "The O'Donnells were kings of Munster twinty thousand years ago, ye must know; and one of me ancestors wint out with Prince Madoc, of Wales, as ye've heard tell about, haven't ye? Well, any way, me ancestor wint out wid a colony, tin thousand years before Columbus was iver thought of, an' it's my belief as he settled around somewhere in these parts. Sure an' I'll wait till we know the language, an' tell them all about it, an' ask them av they'd ate a relation, an'— Holy mother of Moses! who the divil's that?" he suddenly broke off, as he was tapped on the shoulder by a soft hand.

Gilmore had been so wrapped in his own gloomy thoughts and in looking out through the doorway over the mysterious city of Tlalotla, that he had noticed nothing.

He now looked up in his turn, and uttered a faint cry of astonishment and admiration.

Two girls stood beside them, gazing on them with looks of great kindness.

Both were royally beautiful, but as different in style as could be conceived. The one was very tall indeed for a woman. Her hair, of the brightest yellow gold, flowed over her shoulders in great waves of light, till it touched the floor behind her, as she walked. She had great violet eyes, that looked into yours like a wild doe's, soft, pleading and fearless. Her complexion was perfectly fair, red and white.

The other was a little fairy. Dark brunette, with the great almond-shaped black eyes of the Indian races of the South, and an oval face of perfectly aquiline contour; her smile, parting her red lips, disclosed teeth like pearls. Her hair was even longer than that of the blonde, and she had draped it around her like a scarf, the end thrown over the right shoulder, and touching the ground, even then.

Both girls were dressed alike, in simple robes of white cotton, bordered with featherwork. Arms and feet were bare, and the former were adorned with broad gold braceleta,

while a gold circlet, with a single white plume, crowned the heads of both.

O'Donnell sat gazing spellbound at this beautiful vision, without the power of speech. Gilmore's fancy, somewhat artistic, was at once entranced.

The Fenian recovered himself first. His native powers of insinuation returned to him as he saw the fair beauty gazing kindly on him. An Irishman takes to the ladies naturally. Roderick O'Donnell fell on one knee, and addressed the maiden

CHAPTER IV.

HAROTAHCHE AND ITANA.

"HOLY Mary, ever virgin!" began the handsome giant. "An' has yer ladyship kindly come to visit two poor sinners like us? Oh! queen o' heaven! but ye're too good to us. An' if the beautiful little saint with yer ladyship—I haven't the honor of her acquaintance, however—would be kind enough to take pity on me an' me comrade here, she'll do us both a favor we'll pay with our lives."

The tall beauty smiled, and turned to the tiny one, saying a few words in a strange language.

From her lips it sounded like the gurgle of a mountain brook over pebbles of musical glass.

"Now by the piper that played before Moses!" said O'Donnell, ruefully, here's a fix, as the Yankees call it. She can't be the Virgin Mary, or she'd understand English. I'll tip her the Latin. *Oh, Sancte Marie, semper virgine, ora pro—* Divil a word does she understand, Gilmore. It's only a haythen princess, after all."

"I'll try her in Spanish," said Gilmore. "All these Navahoes and Apaches understand some of it."

"Leave me alone, Mr. Gilmore," said O'Donnell. "Sure an' I l'arned to read Don Quixote afore ye were weaned."

And he addressed a torrent of Spanish to the girls.

"Oh, beautiful señoritas!" he cried, "behold at your feet

an unhappy victim of your charms, who came all the way from the other side of the world, expressly to see your own wonderful beauty. Behold us and pity us! Grant but one smile from those lovely eyes, an' we'll both go to slaughter and be glad to be kilt, if ye say the word."

The little beauty turned to her companion, and the two began an animated discussion.

"Didn't I tip them that illigant?" said O'Donnell, quizzically. "Av they understand a word of Spanish, that'll sett'th them. Sure there niver was a woman, from Eve to Cleopatra, as wouldn't give in to a little delicate blarney, properly administered. And it takes an Irishman to do the job nately. Sure an' if all the French and Spaniards was rolled in a lump, they wouldn't be a patch on a rale Tipperary man, as had kissed the Blarney Stone."

"Hush!" said Gilmore; "they are going to speak."

And, in effect, the taller of the two suddenly addressed the Fenian chief, in good Spanish.

"Señors," she said, "you are both prisoners, and both condemned to death. We are the priestesses of the Moon, and we serve in the temple. Once upon a time, many moons ago, our great caçique, Quahtemoczin, came in from a raid, with a number of white prisoners. Among them was an old man, who was allowed to live, while the others were sacrificed to Quetzalcoatl. Quahtemoczin kept him to teach us Spanish, and he taught us two more than that. He taught us to adore the one true God, and the queen of heaven, for he was a padre."

"Oh, Holy Mother!" cried O'Donnell, seizing her white hand with rapture, and showering kisses on it; "an' didn't I know ye wasn't a haythen, when ye first set yer purty little white feet on this dirty stone floor?—Oh, murderation! Gilmore! Gilmore! ye cold-blooded little scamp! *why don't ye kiss the little one's hand, ye omadhawn?*"

The blonde beauty gently withdrew her hand, not as if much displeased, however. She did not seem to understand O'Donnell. She continued her story:

"We are the daughters of Quahtemoczin, the caçique of all this city of Tlalotla, but we promised our old padre to save all the Christians from death that we could."

"And are you sisters?" asked Gilmore, speaking for the first time.

"Oh, yes," answered the lesser fairy, with a gay smile; our father has many wives, and we were born both on the same day. That is why they named us Harotahche and Itana—Morning and Evening."

The taller beauty threw her arm caressingly around the little one's neck. Itana's black curls nestled just over Harotache's heart.

"And my mother was a Christian," observed the latter, proudly; "she was taken captive from Chihuahua, and learned to love an Azteca chief better than a Mexican coward."

"And by the powers, she was right," said O'Donnell. "Thim thunderin' blackguards of Greasers are only fit to steal."

"But please tell us, Señorita Harotahche," said Gilmore, "where are we now? whose is this temple? and why are we left here alone and unguarded?"

"You are in the temple of the great god Quetzalcoatl," answered the maiden. "It stands on an island in the midst of the great lake Tlaloma. The lake is full of alligators, and they think you can not escape. You will be kept here till the great feast of Quetzalcoatl, now ten moons away. Then you will be sacrificed by Ixtaquotl the high priest, if you can not in the mean time, do some great deed to prove yourselves worthy of adoption by the nation."

"And are Christians ever adopted in your nation?" asked Gilmore, surprised.

"Sometimes," she answered. "But they must find an Azteca girl who will offer to marry them, and lose her hair."

"What do you mean?" he asked, puzzled.

"We are proud of our hair in Tlalotla," she answered. "It is considered a terrible disgrace to lose it. If an Azteca girl will lose her hair for a man, she must love him very much. But such is the law, if an Azteca weds a captive. My father's hair once fell down below his spurs, and he had to lose it to marry my mother, who was going to be sacrificed to the Sun god."

"An' I don't blame him, if she was like you," said O'Don

nell, earnestly. "But where 'll we get two girls to do that for us?"

"We shall see," she answered. "Have you been outside yet?"

"We have that," said O'Donnell; "and a mighty comforting prospect was that same. Nothing but water and crocodiles."

"Come out again," she said; "I will show you something."

The two girls turned, and swept toward the low doorway, with a mien full of majesty and grace. They looked as they were, born princesses.

O'Donnell erected his gigantic frame, and followed them. The vast, silent hall echoed in all its cavernous depths to the sound of his heavy footsteps, as he stalked on. Gilmore following him, seemed to be only a little child.

The four stood on the broad platform, which ran all round the temple, for a breadth of a hundred feet. The temple itself was built of immense white masses of limestone, loaded with sculpture, and stretched out for a length of several hundred feet. The walls were low in comparison, and the hall long and narrow. The roof being flat, the breadth was limited by the size of the beams, as no pillars were used.

The whole plateau was formed on the summit of a lofty island, evidently volcanic in origin, that reared itself in the midst of the lake. Its sides had been cut into a succession of terraces, and sloped down to the water like gigantic steps.

Harotahche pointed to the lake around them, whose shores were sprinkled so thickly with white villas, evidently belonging to persons of considerable wealth. The lake was basking in the rays of the afternoon sun, and the canoes were almost all moored. At the foot of the mound on which they stood, lay a small canoe, apparently of gold, for it flashed all over, inside and out.

"You see yonder canoe," said the superb blonde. "Let me tell you, Christian, it is well to have friends in Tlalotla. My father knows not that we are Christians. He has let us come hither, to convert you to the worship of Quetzalcoatl. It has always been a great triumph for the high priest, if he could gain a convert in a victim. He loves to tear out the

heart of such a one, and offer it to Quetzalcoatl, as a precious offering."

"Divil blame him," said the Fenian; "I wonder would the ould thief like to have mine?"

"Alas! Christian," said the girl, tenderly; "Quahtemoczin has sworn to divide your heart in pieces among his braves, that they may draw courage from it. The children of the great Moctezuma are far braver than their ancestors, and they have resolved to spare no white man, unless he becomes an Azteca forever."

"And unless a purty darlin' of a girl gives up her elegant hair for him. I understand, me beauty. But much I'd care for the haythens, av I once knew their language. Señorita Harotahche, would yer ladyship be good enough to teach us a little of that same beautiful language of yours, that sounds for all the world like the gurgle of good poteen out of the dear ould black bottle."

Harotahche was about to answer, when her attention was suddenly arrested by a low, rumbling sound. Itana turned pale and clutched her sister.

"Oh, sister!" she ejaculated; "it is the war-drum from the teocalli in the city."

Gilmore and his companion turned round to the south side of the lake, where the city of Tlalotla lay basking in the sun, with its white houses, and broad canals that ran through every street, and made the town a second Venice.

In the suburbs they could see people rushing out in crowds, to the west side of the city, while the deep booming of the war-drum grew louder and louder every instant, and echoed from the summits of several teocallis or mound temples in different parts of the city.

Harotahche and Itana were both pale and trembling, and the white men were tormented with curiosity to know the cause of the tumult.

Itana spoke first, in terrified tones:

"It is ~~the~~ Devil Bear."

CHAPTER V.

THE DEVIL BEAR.

O'DONNELL repeated Itana's words in tones of wonder.

"The Devil Bear? And are all those people out after one bear?"

Harotahche answered:

"Oh, no, señor! It is no one bear. It is a whole family. The first we saw of those terrible creatures was three winters ago, when they came down from the mountains. There were two old ones and two cubs, then. But the old ones were as large as buffaloes, and all our arrows failed to hurt them. Quahtemoczin and all his warriors strove with them without success. The old father bear is nearly white, and he can run as fast as a horse almost. In one day he slew forty of our best warriors, and since that they have not dared to attack him. And every winter he comes back to ravage our herds, and the cubs have grown up, so that now we have four enemies instead of two; and the hearts of the children of Moctezuma have become as water before them."

"But your warriors have carbines," urged Gilmore; "I saw them."

"True, señor; but only a few. Quahtemoczin's warriors took them from the dragoons at Chihuahua; but powder is scarce and lead precious. We dare not waste our ammunition, which is wanted in battles."

"And besides," observed Itana, "the devil bears laugh at our bullets, and to fire at them excites their frenzy. See there, señores! See!"

She pointed to the city as she spoke.

The confused crowd in the suburbs could be plainly seen from where they were. The lake was only about a half-mile across at the place, and figures were easily distinguishable. Several thousand people had collected, and were swaying about, at a loss what to do.

Nothing else was in sight yet.

But as Itana spoke, a wild, shrill cry arose from the crowd, who broke and fled back to the city in the greatest confusion.

But where was the enemy?

As the thought crossed Gilmore's mind, four great beasts made their appearance from a belt of timber, and stalked into the open fields toward the city. Even at the distance at which they were, there was no mistaking the outline of the king of American ursines.

They were grizzly bears.

And such bears!

"Oh! Saint Patrick!" ejaculated O'Donnell; "and it's div-
as they are, sure enough!"

As Harotahche had said, their leader was nearly white, and at least the size of a full-grown buffalo. He went in the van, followed by his mate, almost as large as himself; and two other animals, each as tall as a horse, walked after.

The terrible beasts walked leisurely on toward the town, the crowd fleeing before them. The Babel of cries and shrieks even reached the temple in the lake.

It was amazing to see the terror inspired in that immense crowd by four wild beasts.

But now there came a sudden diversion.

A body of horsemen, their lances glittering in the sun, came galloping out from the city to meet the bears.

"It is my father!" cried Harotahche, almost unconsciously.
'Oh, stop him! They will kill him!'

But the body of horsemen, so formidable in looks, soon proved to be as useless as the unarmed crowd. They charged down on the bears with a loud yell, shaking their spears, as if about to annihilate them. But as they arrived closer and closer, their speed was gradually slackened; and when within about a hundred feet, they finally halted.

And then the four great beasts made a simultaneous rush, right up to the body of warriors; and the latter, with singular unanimity, turned tail, and scattered in every direction.

"The cowardly spalpeens!" muttered O'Donnell, as he looked. "Four bastes puttin' a hundred lances to flight. I could do better than that, single-handed, if I was there"

Gilmore grew excited too.

"If I had but my rifle!" he said, regretfully. "But it's no

use wishing. Why don't the fools fire, and riddle the beasts?"

The scattered horsemen answered his question by returning to the charge, on the rear of the animals, coming in from all sides. It was evident that they wished to draw them away from the town, trusting to the speed of their horses for escape.

But if such was their intention, it was frustrated. The two old bears continued their march to the town, without deigning to notice the attack, while the younger ones every now and then turned round and made a rush, that drove back the enemy with ludicrous haste.

In a few minutes more, the devil bears had entered the town, and were hidden from view behind the houses.

As they entered, the whole population could be seen, flying through the streets with every appearance of terror, and streaming out of the other side of the town.

Harotahche and Itana were wild with alarm.

"They never came, in the summer, before," said the former. "What has sent them here? It must be that the great god Quetzalcoatl is angry with us, and has sent his servants to punish us."

"*That* for the great god Quetzalcoatl!" said O'Donnell contemptuously. "I'll go bail to rid the town of the four bastes before I'm a week older, if your father will give me my life for it and that of my comrade."

"But how could you do it?" asked she, incredulously. "They are invulnerable. Arrows and bullets turn from them alike."

"If ye want it done, señorita," answered the giant, "just ye say the word, and tell your father, the caçique, to give us back our arms, and let us try it."

"But your companion is wounded already," said Itana. "He is not fit to go out against an enemy."

"I can do more than that, if my life is at stake," said Little Gilmore, quietly. "Tell the caçique to give me only my pistols, and that we will rid the town of your devil-bears, as you call them." Itana looked at him wonderingly.

"Why you are but a little larger than I," she said. "Harotahche could carry you in her arms. What could you do against the devil-bears?"

"Try us, and you shall see," he replied, smiling.

Harotahche looked at him, almost for the first time.

"You are mad, little one," she answered. "When the great Quahtemoczin has failed, is it for a child like you to boast?"

Gilmore flushed angrily. He was very sensitive to slights about his size.

"The señorita had a priest to instruct her," he said. "Do she ever hear of David and Goliath?"

O'Donnell interposed.

"L'ave it to me, ye little divil," he said, good-naturedly, in English. "Sure and we must blarney the girls, whenever we mate them."

Then turning to Harotahche, he continued:

"Beautiful señorita, never refuse a good offer. Your town is in terror of four devils. Well, ye may tell the cacique that I'm grandson to the king of all the devils, and that the beauty of your eyes has taken all the devil out of me. Send word to him, that if he wishes, we will kill these bears for him, in short order."

The girls stood, hesitating, and gazing into the town. Every thing there had subsided into stillness. The war-drums were silent, the teocallis deserted. The whole population of a town of nearly ten thousand inhabitants had fled in terror from four wild beasts. The horsemen could be seen, hovering about the outskirts, afraid to enter. The bears were invisible.

"Well, señorita," observed Gilmore, quietly, "will you let four enemies drive a whole town out, or will you accept the help we offer?"

Itana it was who spoke now.

"Let us go, Harotahche," she said. "Who knows what may happen? The good padre told us that the queen of heaven could do any thing."

"Ye may say that," said O'Donnell, confidently. "Sure and we'll give ye the skins of the four bastes before to-morrow night, if the cacique will give us our arms."

"We will go," said Harotahche, briefly; "farewell, señores." And without another word the two beauties swept off down the slope of the teocalli, to where their canoe was moored below.

O'Donnell was about to follow, but he was checked by a gesture from the queenly blonde.

"By the powers!" he observed, as he stood with Gilmore on the top of the mount, watching the two white-robed figures; "if we only get out of this scrape alive, I'll make her Mrs. O'Donnell, if she was fifty haythens. And wouldn't she make an iligant figure in a silk dress? Oh! Gilmore! Ye're a cold-blooded little misogynist, so ye are. Ye didn't so much as wink your eye at the little one. I'd be willin' t. drop the cause of liberty, and live up here in the mountains forever, so I would, and be the king of the Cannibal Islands, so I had her for such a queen."

Gilmore smiled sadly.

"You are enthusiastic, like all your race," he said; "I have outlived enthusiasm, love, every thing else, now."

O'Donnell laughed.

"So ye think, me boy. So ye think. Wait till the little one's had ye in training a while. See! They're pushing off now."

Gilmore looked down. The graceful canoe, with the two white-robed figures in it, relieved against the glow of the gilding, was shooting away over the bosom of the placid lake toward the reedy margin on the west side of the town.

CHAPTER VI.

FIGHTING SATAN.

QUAHEMOCZIN, cacique of Tlalotla, sat on his horse among his warriors. His face was stern and anxious, with the look of a brave man, in a strait where his courage was of no avail.

To understand the terror inspired by the bears, we must consider the almost invulnerability of the animals themselves, and the poverty of the Indian weapons. As for firearms, their carbines were useless, for ammunition had failed the Navahoes on their last raid. Bows and arrows and spears

were all that they had to depend on, except Gilmore's revolvers, and the huge rifle of O'Donnell, neither of which the chief knew how to use properly. The former he deemed too small, the latter too large.

And so that resistless family of grizzlies could be plainly seen, promenading the streets of Tlalotla, in search of a fitting prey, while two hundred warriors on horses waited without, not daring to attack them.

Matters were in this unsatisfactory state, when a movement among his warriors attracted Quahtemoczin's attention to his rear. Looking round, he perceived his daughter Harotahche, riding up to him. She came straight up to the old chief, and bowed her head before him.

"What does the daughter of Quahtemoczin here?" asked the cacique, gravely. "She should be with the women, in safety from the devil bears."

"Harotahche is always safe under the shadow of the great Quahtemoczin," answered the girl, proudly. "I come from the temple of Quetzalcoatl, where the white captives are confined."

"You should have staid there," said the cacique, gloomily. "It may be that the great god is angry with us, and has sent his children to destroy us, for not sacrificing these white men at once."

"Not so, my father. The two white captives offer to go forth at once, and slay these terrible creatures for us, if you will promise them their lives in case of victory."

"Are the white men mad?" demanded Quahtemoczin, scornfully. "Do they think they can kill the children of the devil, whom the Aztecas bow down before?"

"They have promised to do it, my father," she replied. "They have said that we shall have their skins before to-morrow night, if you will give them their arms."

Quahtemoczin hesitated.

"But one of them is wounded."

"He was the one most anxious to go," she answered.

"Well," he said, at last. "Be it so. The great god Quetzalcoatl has sent his children for a sacrifice, and the sons of Moctezuma flee from the priests. If these white men are satisfied to die thus, let them die. I will go to them."

He turned his horse and rode down to the lake, leaving the warriors to watch the bears.

The latter were to be plainly seen in the deserted streets, feasting on the carcasses of several cattle, which lay where they had been struck down.

The cacique ferried himself over to the island, in the canoe used by his daughters. He laid down in the stern the two gold-mounted revolvers, belonging to Gilmore, which he had worn in his own belt till that moment. Beside them he placed the long four-ounce rifle, which had been borne by the redoubtable O'Donnell when captured.

The two captives must have seen him coming, for he found them waiting for him at the foot of the mound. The cacique stepped ashore, and regarded them both keenly.

"So you are willing to go forth and fight the devils?" he said; "and suppose they kill you?"

"We are in the hands of a greater than Quetzalcoatl," answered Gilmore, gravely. "You shall see this day that the God of the whites can protect us against Quetzalcoatl, and all his children."

"The battle is not begun yet," said Quahtemoczin. "But, in case you kill the four devils—what then?"

"We must go free with our lives," said O'Donnell. "We give you safety. You must give us liberty."

"It can not be," said the cacique. "No white man who has entered this valley ever leaves it alive. He must stay here and become an Azteca, or die."

"Sure and we'll be any thing you like, my jewel," replied the giant, good-naturedly; "if ye'll give me the beautiful creature with the bright golden hair, I'll stay here all my life."

Quahtemoczin regarded the other in silence, from head to foot. His eye gleamed with satisfaction as it passed over the stalwart form of the Irish giant.

"Kill me those bears," he said, "and you shall be the son of Quahtemoczin, and second in Tlalotla."

"And what will ye do for my comrade here?" asked the Fenian chief. "We stick together, ye know."

Quahtemoczin looked at Gilmore's small slight frame, doubtfully.

"What can he do?" he asked.

"Give me my weapons, and I will show you," said Gilmore, quietly.

The cacique pointed to the boat. Gilmore took up his pistols and examined them. They were uninjured. The little dandy silver-mounted cartridge-box lay beside them, in which he had taken so much pride. It was still full of cartridges and caps. He put on the belt and stuck the pistols therein. Then he addressed the chief:

"You ask what I can do," he said. "Shall I cut a feather off your coronet; and which?"

Quahtemoczin drew himself up.

"The middle one," he said, quietly.

Gilmore drew out a pistol, put it up carelessly almost without aim, and fired. The middle feather of the cacique's coronet fluttered down, cut in two just above the circlet.

Quahtemoczin bowed.

"It is good," he said; "my brothers can go. If the bears spare them, they shall be the sons of Quahtemoczin."

O'Donnell picked up his enormous rifle and pouch, and put on the latter.

"And it's little I ever thought," he said, "when I was shootin' elephants in Bengal, with this old tool, that I'd come to be knockin' over grizzlies for a parcel of haythens. Come, Gilmore. The sun will be settin' in another hour; and we'd better be stirrin'."

The three men entered the boat, and the cacique took the paddle.

"I tell ye what, Gilmore," observed the Irishman, after a while, speaking English, that Quahtemoczin might not understand; "it's goin' to be a ticklish job gettin' these four divils laid out. I'll go bail for *one*, anyhow; but what good your pistols will be, is more than I can see."

"Do yon remember what the Yankees did at Bunker Hill?" asked Gilmore. "They waited till they could see the whites of the enemy's eyes. I shall wait till I can touch him in the brain."

"Have ye nerve enough?" inquired O'Donnell, anxiously.

"You shall see," answered Gilmore. "Feel my pulse, if you like."

"Quiet enough. Faith! and you'll do. How shall we go at the divils?"

"Are you a good shot with that blunderbuss?"

"I can hit a grizzly in the head, and if that doesn't stop him, he'll be a curious cr'ature. Well, herè we are."

As he spoke, the bow of the canoe gave a great sweep around, and they brought up alongside of a flight of steps, that led into the principal street of Tlalotla.

O'Donnell shouldered his huge rifle and sprung ashore, followed by Gilmore. The latter, with his wounded arm still in a sling, looked but a poor figure to encounter the terrible foes they were soon to meet. But he walked up the steps as coolly as if he was entering a ball-room.

Quahtemoczin remained in the canoe, waiting for the sounds of conflict. Brave as he was, the superstitions of his people had taken hold on him to such an extent, that the real danger was trebled by imagination. He waited in silence by the steps, ready to push off into the lake, at the first intimation of danger.

Around him, and in the waters below, sported a number of alligators of large size, swimming lazily to and fro, in circles around the canoe.

It was as much as a man's life was worth, to bathe in the lake of Tlaloma.

The cacique listened, and could hear nothing for a long while. The steps of the white men soon ceased to be audible in the street above.

Let us follow their fortunes.

When O'Donnell and the Texan ascended the steps, they found themselves in a broad street, with a canal in the center. The houses were low and white, the street below perfectly empty, and still as the grave. The canal was crossed by innumerable bridges, but not a soul appeared upon them.

"Come, Gilmore," observed the Irishman, coolly. "The place appears to be evacuated. The garrison is gone, but where's the enemy?"

"Come and see," answered the other, and they walked boldly on up the street.

It was a fearful undertaking for two men to venture thus

into a town, where four of the most dangerous beasts in nature were concealed.

They went swiftly along, their steps echoing upon the flags. As they passed the side streets that led into the suburbs, they could see the long line of Indians outside, watching the bears. Several of them motioned to the place where they were, with their lances. It was still some streets ahead.

O'Donnell halted, and examined his rifle. Gilmore drew one of his pistols from his belt.

Then they moved on again.

At last they came to the central square of the city, and as they turned the corner of the street, caught sight of the wild beasts.

O'Donnell uttered a low ejaculation.

"Holy Moses! What devils!"

"But where's the fourth?" asked Gilmore.

There were only three grizzlies in the square. But what brutes! The smallest of them was as tall as a horse, and capable of exterminating a dozen men with a sweep of his paw.

"It's the mother and cubs," whispered O'Donnell. "But what cubs! The old man must be an elephant at last."

Gilmore made no answer. He walked directly out to the bears.

All three caught sight of him at the same time. They were feeding on the carcass of an ox. The mother bear gave a horrid growling snarl over her meal, but did not offer to stir. She had too much contempt for human beings, to disturb herself.

One of the younger bears, who had satisfied his appetite, turned and stalked solemnly toward the strangers.

He evidently expected them to turn and flee.

To his surprise they only advanced upon him, not seeming to fear him.

This bear, who was as tall as a dray-horse, hesitated to march on two men, when he found that they faced him. His pace grew slower and slower, till he finally halted, and stood regarding them, at about twenty yards off. The two men halted in turn, and began to back away. The instant the bear perceived this, he took up his march again.

The men still retreated, till there was about a hundred yards between them and the two bears at the carcass.

Then O'Donnell halted, and knelt down on one knee. The bear slowly advanced, and halted about six paces off.

The Irishman rose up to his feet. As he did so, the bear rose up also on its hind legs, towering up over the colossal form of the hunter, till O'Donnell looked like a boy.

The instant he did so, the Fenian gave two quick steps forward, and pointed his huge rifle at the bear's throat.

There was a flash and a report, and lo! the gigantic brute toppled over on its back, and lay, faintly kicking its last.

"Hurroo for old Ireland!" cried O'Donnell.

"Load up, quick!" cried the sharp voice of little Gilmore. "Here come the others!"

As he spoke, the slender form of the little Texan passed quickly to the front, and he marched down on the two grizzlies, who, at the sound of the shot, left their meal, and trotted up, growling horribly.

Gilmore's position was one of awful peril. Death seemed almost certain. That one frail, slender mortal was going to meet the two terrible beasts, with no weapon but a pistol in his hand, and with one arm in a sling.

O'Donnell, loading his heavy rifle as fast as he could, was struck with the almost ludicrous inequality.

"By the powers!" he muttered; "it's like a bantam-cock going to fight an ostrich."

But while he muttered he was pouring in the powder, and ramming down the great conical ball, which would make a hole like your fist in the skull even of a grizzly bear. When it was loaded, he cast it over his arm, and walked rapidly forward, to assist in the strife.

But before he had arrived, science and coolness had triumphed over superior strength, in one case.

The resolute bearing of Gilmore had its effect even on the old she-bear. Huge and ferocious as she was, she suffered herself to be overawed by the imposing attitude of a single man, and reduced her pace to a walk, while the second bear slunk behind her.

So they marched to meet each other, till within six paces, when Gilmore halted, and threw up his arm, with a shout.

And in obedience to the signal, the bear followed the instincts of her race, and rearing up on her hind legs, waddled to the attack.

The wary Texan, his blue eye flashing like a scimitar, stepped to meet her, with his right foot foremost, raising his pistol to the attitude of a fencer, ready to spring back.

He fired one shot right into the bear's throat.

The great beast uttered a terrible snarl, and halted, tearing at the spot with her claws.

"Too small," muttered Gilmore, recocking his pistol.

As he did so, down came the bear on all fours, her head almost touching him.

In a flash, it seemed to O'Donnell, looking on, the Texan seized the opportunity, which lasted about half a second. He clapped the muzzle of the pistol to the eye of the bear, and shot her through the brain.

O'Donnell himself came running up as she fell.

"Good boy!" he shouted. "Get out with ye. Legs are trumps. Go back, ye little divil, I say."

As he spoke, he rushed up to the third bear, which stood hesitating whether to flee or attack, and fired a bullet into its broad chest.

A great bloody hole appeared there, and the huge beast dropped.

It struggled up again in another moment, however, and came lumbering after them.

"Run, I tell ye!" shouted O'Donnell, once more. As he spoke, he caught up the childish form of the little Texan, and made the best of his way across the plaza, and down the street, with his double burden. His long legs seemed to fly as he went along, and he left the wounded grizzly far behind.

But O'Donnell knew that a worse danger awaited them on their road to the canoe.

He caught sight of the old white bear, coming down from another part of the city at a clumsy gallop, lumbering along as fast as most horses could go.

He did not feel inclined to wait for him, when his shot had failed to kill the third bear.

Moreover, the size and appearance of the *devil-grizzly* struck

terror into his heart, stout as he was. The monster came bounding along, looming like an elephant.

Roderick O'Donnell beat a retreat.

Presently he began to tire. Light as Gilmore was, he was something to carry, along with a heavy rifle. The Texan, moreover, angrily demanded to be put down. O'Donnell dropped him, and the two ran down the street to the quay as hard as they could go.

The landing was in sight, and O'Donnell in advance, when he bethought himself to look back.

His blood seemed to freeze in his veins, when he saw that the huge devil-grizzly was within a hundred yards of them, and gaining rapidly. Little Gilmore was some paces behind, as pale as death, and laboring terribly. His chest wounds had shortened his breath. The gallant Irishman halted in his tracks, and began to load his rifle. There was just the ghost of a chance that he would be ready in time.

"Go to the canoe, quick!" he shouted to Gilmore, as the latter hesitated an instant. "Into the canoe, and attract his attention!"

The Texan nodded, and passed on behind him. O'Donnell rammed down the bullet in frantic haste, and threw up the piece to cap it, just as the huge beast came roaring at him, open mouthed.

Unlike the others, the devil-grizzly never reared up, nor slackened his pace, at the bold front assumed by the hunter. He came straight on, with fury indescribable depicted on his frightful countenance.

The lion-hearted O'Donnell quailed a moment, as he saw the enormous jaws, the small, fierce eyes, the retreating forehead, at which it seemed hopeless to fire, when the brain lay so far behind.

As the monster came within ten feet, the hunter changed his aim, and fired right into the open mouth of the brute.

The next moment he was sent flying to one side, with a blow so tremendous that he was knocked headforemost into the canal, and the great beast, never pausing, lumbered forward toward the figure of Little Gilmore, who had halted about five yards behind.

CHAPTER VII.

VICTORY.

LITTLE GILMORE was not the man to leave a comrade. Small as he was, his courage amounted to perfect fearlessness. When O'Donnell motioned him behind, he had nodded to deceive the other.

His resolve was to die with him.

He felt that his last hour was come, but he stood firm.

His marvelous coolness and quickness of aim were displayed in the three seconds left to him before the devil-grizzly touched him.

He fired three shots right into the animal's broad forehead, each shot plumb in the center of the same mark.

It seemed to be useless trying the experiment, with such a mere toy as the pistol; but, it was the only chance.

The instant the last shot was fired he leaped to one side.

To his amazement, the devil-grizzly halted and staggered.

The great beast, which had hardly felt a four-ounce bullet, in a spot *not vital*, was stunned by the three little pellets, put in the right place at four feet distance.

The Texan hesitated no longer. He turned and ran for the lake. He was not twenty yards from the steps.

He reached them in safety and looked back. The great devil-grizzly was shaking its head and lumbering after him, but staggering. The other bear was down again. It had evidently received its death-wound.

Gilmore ran down the steps. Quahtemoczin was there with the canoe, backed off several yards.

As the Texan appeared, the caçique backed away still further.

"Take me on board!" said Gilmore, rapidly. "They are all dead but one, and I must reload."

Quahtemoczin seemed to hesitate. The peril was terrible. Gilmore felt that he had no chance.

"Take me off for a few minutes," he urged, and the caçique began to paddle toward him.

Gilmore watched his face. He saw an expression of ghastly horror come over it, and Quahtemoczin dropped the paddle for a moment. The Texan looked up to the top of the bank.

The grim face of the devil-grizzly was coming over the top, all streaked with blood, the great white teeth bared, the eyes gleaming with malignant fire.

As the bear saw Gilmore, it uttered a savage snarl, and came down the steps at him with a clumsy rush.

The cool, desperate fellow waited, standing on the bottom step by the edge of the water; and, as the great beast came down, he sprung to one side, with his usual rapid decision.

An instant sooner, and the bear would have had time to turn; an instant later, and it would have been too late. As it was, the bear missed its aim, and went headforemost into the lake, disappearing from view.

Gilmore darted up the steps, without waiting to see more, and ran up the street to where O'Donnell had been left.

He found his comrade's gun lying by the edge of the canal, and, looking over, discovered the Irishman himself, trying to climb up the bank.

Poor O'Donnell had been hardly used.

In passing him, the devil-grizzly had made one rapid blow at him with its huge forepaw.

That one blow had sent the giant twenty feet, throwing him into the canal, with all the breath knocked out of him, three ribs broken, and a piece of flesh a foot long torn out of his left side, and left hanging.

The poor fellow was trying to climb up, and blundering back again.

He was clearly stunned and confused.

Gilmore looked back apprehensively, expecting to see the terrible devil-grizzly coming over the bank again. He drew his remaining pistol, resolved to sell his life dearly.

But no grizzly made its appearance.

Instead of that, he heard a terrible noise of splashing and confusion in the lake, with loud roars and snarls.

Gilmore started.

"Courage, O'Donnell!" he cried. "We are safe. **THE ALLIGATORS HAVE GOT HIM!**"

As he spoke these words, O'Donnell, after a violent effort, managed to get a foothold on the shore. He sat down quite exhausted, while the noise in the lake became louder than ever.

When the grizzly lumbered into the lake, the impetus of his fall carried him out and under the water for about twenty feet. He rose to the surface, so close to the canoe of Quahtemoczin, that the chief, with a shout of terror, involuntarily struck a him with the paddle.

The bear was in the act of turning back to regain the shore in his desire for vengeance on Gilmore, when the sharp edge of the paddle struck him.

Instantly, with a furious snarl of rage he struggled round in the water, at his *new* assailant.

The Navahoe chief plied his paddle with frantic energy, but he was so confused that he hardly knew what to do, and only barely succeeded in keeping the canoe out of the bear's clutches.

He was beginning to regain his self-command, however, when a sudden diversion occurred.

He saw the bear again turn round, uttering a fearful roar of rage and pain, and the next moment, all the water near the landing was lashed into white foam, by a tremendous contest.

The chief could see, in the dark lake beneath, dozens of long gliding forms, darting to the scene of strife. The great bear leaped to and fro in the water, exerting all his enormous strength, in frenzied efforts to escape or avenge himself.

The alligators were all small, and singly the great beast could have exterminated them.

But in numbers, and in deep water, he was no match for them. His great jaws closed on one, and he tore the piece out of the reptile's back. But the others were all round him at the same time, lashing with their tails, and tearing away with their sharp teeth.

The huge monster struggled to gain the bank. That bank was steep and shelving by the landing-place, but the drifting of the combatants carried them away further down the lake. Quahtemoczin knew that there was a shallow point there, and,

sure enough, he soon saw the great white bear emerge from the water, and stand up on the shallow.

Now the contest became more equal.

The bear had a foothold, and his exertions became greater than ever. Quahtemoczin saw him seize one alligator, at least eight feet long, by the back, and fling it away with a shake as a terrier shakes a rat.

Then he bounded toward the shore, with several of the hideous saurians still biting and hanging on. His light carcass was all covered with wounds, and red gashes were all over his legs.

But he reached the shore at last, and then turned and seized one of the tormentors by the back.

The instant land was touched the alligators dropped off. They seemed to realize that they were powerless there. But the devil-grizzly, shaking off his last foe, seemed to have no more anxiety for the contest than they. He made his way up the bank, slowly and painfully; and hobbled off through the streets, in full retreat.

Gilmore, binding up O'Donnell's wound by the side of the canal, saw the well-known clumsy form cross the deserted street, some way above. The Texan clutched his pistol, but the precaution was useless. The devil-grizzly was beaten for once. Human beings he despised, but the alligators had taken the fight out of him for the nonce.

He marched straight out of the town, on to the line of Indians, left outside.

The wounded beast, all covered with blood, still looked so terrible that the superstitious Navahoes quailed before his glance, and made way for him.

The devil-grizzly ran through, and made the best of his way to the mountains.

Tlalote was called

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WHITE WARRIORS.

THE next day there was rejoicing in Tlalotla.

The country was saved from the terrible scourge which had so long afflicted it ; and the white strangers, before doomed to death, were almost adored.

At evening of that day, the two friends sat side by side in the palace of Quahtemoczin. The room was large and lofty, the walls glowed with the brightest pictures in fresco, grotesque in drawing, but gorgeous in coloring. Beautiful slave girls, with feather fans, cooled their frames with a grateful breeze.

The contrast in their position from the evening before was very great. Their dress, dirty and ragged from their past adventures, had been changed for gorgeous tunics of feather-work, and their wounds were carefully tended.

"By the powers, Gilmore!" suddenly exclaimed O'Donnell, as he puffed slowly at a long calumet; "if it wasn't for the feel of me wounds, and the maulin' I got with that divil of a baste, I'd drame I was a Mahommedan, and gone to Paradise among the houris."

Gilmore smiled.

"You're a true Irishman," he said. "No sooner out of a fight than into love."

"And why wouldn't I?" inquired the Fenian, naively. "Isn't fighting and kissing the two best things ever was made, barrin' good whisky? And by that token, I'd like to see a little bottle of that same, better than all the milk and chickens they've given us, since we've been here. I wonder would one of thim purty little angels get me some if I asked her?"

"They wouldn't understand you," said Gilmore. "And, besides, where is the whisky to come from, here?"

"I'm thinkin' I'll have to tache them how to make it," said O'Donnell, with a quizzical grin. "It's the 'asiest thing in

the world to start a still. Many's the time—God forgive me—that I used to slip out of boordin'-school at Athlone in the night, and get off, over the bogs, to Tim Murtagh's still, where all the gossoons of the country side would be dancin' jigs till the mornin'. And didn't the gaugers catch us one night, and didn't we have the illigant shindy, all alone to ourselves in the hills? Ah! but they were fine times those days. Roderick O'Donnell may have l'arned a good dale in knockin' about the world, but he's never been as happy since then."

"Whatever took you away from there, O'Donnell?" inquired the Texan. "Your education seems to be—"

"Yes, yes," said the Fenian, interrupting. "I might have made a good livin' stayin' there, no doubt. Didn't they want me to be a soldier and serve the queen? And so I did once. But when I grew old enough to know any thing, didn't my heart revolt against the tyranny of the British? I'm a Fenian, my boy. Irish to the backbone."

"Then how came you here?"

"That's my own secret. No one else, not even the brotherhood, knows it. See here, Gilmore. I'll tell ye. The Fenians have been cheated and mismanaged everywhere. All their blood has been spilt in vain, for want of one head, and for want of a place to put their feet on, to begin. I come here to live among these Indians, to gain their confidence. And when I'm ready to move, I'll gather up all the gold and silver of these valleys, and call together the Irish in all parts of the world to follow my standard. And we'll march into Mexico first, and establish the green flag there. We'll call together all the Indians of the plains and the mountains, and they'll be glad to follow us. And then we'll start for Ireland, and drive out all the cursed Sassenachs forever a' ever."

O'Donnell seemed to swell with excitement, as he rapidly recounted his chimerical plan; but Gilmore was saved the necessity of a reply.

The pattering of bare feet on the stone floor was heard. The hanging curtain of grass mat at the broad doorway was thrown aside, and a crowd of Indians entered.

From their gorgeous tunics of feather-cloth, and their gold ornaments, they appeared to be of the higher classes.

They were headed by a venerable old man, who, unlike most Indians, was blessed with a beard. Thin and straggling it was, to be sure, but of some considerable length.

This old man was clothed in long flowing robes of white cotton, his head covered with white drapery. His face was very dark and gloomy in contour, and he seemed to be very averse to doing something or other.

This old man advanced to the middle of the room, and made a long speech to the white men, enforcing his words by emphatic gestures.

But, inasmuch as this harangue was made in pure Aztec, of which neither of them understood a word, the effect was more imposing than instructive.

When the old man had finished, O'Donnell's eyes twinkled with fun. He rose to his feet, and delivered a long speech in reply, in as pure Irish as ever was spoken.

The old gentleman listened attentively with perfect politeness, till the giant had finished ; and then made a rejoinder.

"D'ye know any Greek, Gilmore?" asked O'Donnell "Because if ye do, ye can answer the old gentleman with a purty little quotation, like I did."

"Oh ! nonsense !" answered the Texan. "What did he come here for ; and what does he want, I wonder?"

"Divil a one o' me knows," said O'Donnell coolly. "Sure and it's the high priest, I believe, old Ixtaquotl, the fellow Harotahche told us o'."

The old man caught the sound of the last words, and nodded his head vehemently, repeating, as he tapped his breast :

"Chichi Ixtaquotl. (hichi Ixtaquotl.)"

"Very happy to meet ye, Mr. Chichi Ixtaquotl," said the Irishman, quietly. "And it's wishing I am, that your name won't do ye any more harm than the spellin' of it does me. Why can't ye have a decent Christian name, like Patrick or Michael or even Rory ? Chichi's bad enough, but the Ixtaquotl ought to be throttled, so it ought."

"Here's the chief," said Gilmore, at this juncture.

And, in effect, the form of Quahtemoczin, magnificently dressed and glazing all over with gold and jewels, entered the room.

The cacique on the war-path, stern, severe and simple, and the same cacique in the robes of his royalty in Tlalotla were two different people.

Quahtemoczin's countenance, usually severe, was now serene and smiling. He advanced to the white men, and addressed them in Spanish.

"My brothers," he said, "you were alone in the mountains; one of you was wounded; and Quahtemoczin took you home. By the laws of Tlalotla you were condemned a sacrifice to the great God Quetzalcoatl. But it was not the will of the god that you should die. He sent his priests to demand a sacrifice of the people of Tlalotla, and you went out. The white gods proved stronger than Quetzalcoatl's priests, and they slew three of them, and drove the other away. My people have met together, and asked me to spare the white men from death, and I have consented, on condition that they become children of Quahtemoczin forever. They shall be made warriors of Tlalotla, and have the daughters of the chief to wife. They shall dwell in palaces, and have slaves in plenty. But they must stay in this valley forever, and become Aztecas."

O'Donnell waited till the speech was over, and then demanded:

"And will the beautiful little creature have to lose all that elegant back hair, if she marries me?"

"Not now," answered the chief. "She has one year given to her to find a substitute. Failing that, she loses it."

"Give us your fist, old fellow," said the Fenian. "I'm yer man for a thousand, and I'll tache ye how to make whisky and gunpowder, so I will."

"And do you consent?" asked Quahtemoczin, turning to Gilmore.

"What is the alternative?" asked the Texan.

Quahtemoczin regarded him doubtfully for a moment. Then he answered with a single word:

"Death."

"Then take your own way," said Gilmore, quietly. "I will do whatever you please. If you want to kill me, I would just as soon die. If I must marry, I must."

"Good," said the chief. "It is settled."

Then he turned round to the old high priest, and spoke to him in his own language for some minutes ; when the whole body of nobles left the room, with the most profound obeisances.

Quahtemoczin spoke to the white men next.

"Follow me, my brothers," he said. "The ceremonies of making you warriors begin now. Whatever happens, fear nothing."

O'Donnell rose and nodded.

"Come, Gilmore," he observed. "Hould up yer head and don't be afraid. Sure it isn't every day ye can marry a princess."

And they followed Quahtemoczin.

The ceremonies of that day were imposing and gorgeous. The white warriors were duly conducted to the temple of the Sun, where a procession of virgins, typifying the months and seasons, greeted them with songs of triumph. They then went, crowned with flowers, and surrounded by shouting multitudes, to the temple of the Moon, where Harotahche and Itana, at the head of a second procession, sung more songs and danced around them.

Finally they were conducted to the lake, and in a large canoe, surrounded by hundreds of others, made a triumphal progress to the island temple of the war-god.

The huge temple, lately so silent and gloomy, was all alive with shouting multitudes. The old high priest, Ixtaquotl, now dressed in robes of scarlet, stood awaiting them, with a long procession of priests.

O'Donnell and Harotahche, side by side, ascended the mound, followed by Gilmore and Itana. The cacique preceded them, and met the priest.

The final ceremony was curious.

The priest, in the name of the great god Quetzalcoatl, demanded the hearts of the white men for a sacrifice. Quahtemoczin made a long speech in reply, telling of their services to Tlalotla. He demanded that they should be made warriors, as having served the war-god. The priest bowed, and led them to the summit of the island, to where the great sacrificial stone was placed.

Here Quahtemoczin took the white men by the hand, and

addressed a long speech to the altar, to avert the anger of the god, at the loss of a sacrifice. He promised that the white warriors should bring back a life in future, for every drop of blood now lost. Then Ixtaquotl appeared to be satisfied.

A sheep was brought and slain on the altar. The blood was sprinkled in a circle, and the two white warriors stepped therein. The sacred sandals were fastened on their feet, by the hand of Quahtemoczin himself, and they stepped out of the circle, warriors.

But now the priest and all his followers surrounded them again, and once more demanded their lives as a still more precious gift to Quetzalcoatl.

Harotahche and Itana stepped forward, and claimed them from the priests.

Then Ixtaquotl drew forth a sharp knife and prepared to take, as pay for a man's life, a maiden's hair.

Quahtemoczin interposed, and demanded a year for them to find a substitute, on the ground of their rank. The plea was accepted, and the ceremony over.

Gilmore and O'Donnell found themselves, at last, each betrothed to a beautiful princess and lodged in a palace, till the marriage should be celebrated.

What could they ask more, for the present?

CHAPTER IX.

THE BLOOD SPELL.

ABOUT three months after the betrothal of the white warriors, the four lovers sat together in the garden of Quahtemoczin's palace.

Lovers they were now to all intents and purposes. With the ardent and impulsive temperaments of the girls, and the almost as warm disposition of the Texan and Fenian, the romantic circumstances of their meeting had combined to induce as sudden an affection as that of Romeo and Juliet.

The huge frame of O'Donnell was extended at the foot of

a tree, his leonine head reposing in the lap of the beautiful Harotahche. Her long golden hair was thrown half over him, like a veil, and she was talking to him in low tones.

Gilmore's arm was out of its sling at last, and both men were recovered from their wounds.

The little Texan, and the tiny figure of Itana, were nestled close together, like two turtle-doves in their cot.

"Faix!" said O'Donnell, suddenly. "What unfortunate creatures men are!"

"And why?" asked Harotahche.

"Because they're never contented, darlin'."

"And is not my lord contented?" she asked.

"If ye'd asked me a week ago, I'd have said, yes, darlin'. But somehow, since I've felt quite well, there's a feelin' come over me, as if I wanted to be up and doin' some sort of work."

"And does my lord wish to leave Harotache so soon?" she said. "Is it not pleasant any longer?"

"It's pleasant enough," he answered; "but then how are we goin' to save your hair from that old thief of an Ixtaquotl? Sure, and just as I was gettin' proud of it, the ould thief 'll come and cut it all off, and I've ye with a shaved head."

Harotahche was silent.

"I think," said Gilmore, "that if we let these savages cut off the hair of our wives, we deserve to have our own heads taken, too."

"But how will you help it?" demanded Itana, timidly.

"By escaping," said Gilmore, quietly.

O'Donnell slowly rubbed his eyes, and then rose to a sitting posture.

"Ye little divil," he yawned. "Where d'ye get all the surperfluous energy of ideas ye display? Ye talk like a bomb-shell."

"Why shouldn't we escape?" said Gilmore. "We have our weapons."

"But divil a round of ammunition," interrupted the Fenian, "barrin' the loads in the barrels."

"Make more," said Gilmore, coolly.

"And how'll we make it?" asked O'Donnell. "Where's the powder? and if we had it, where's the caps?"

"Lying around the valley," answered the Texan. "You

are a man of education, O'Donnell; and yet you seem to have forgotten that percussion powder is only a nitrate. These mountains are full of nitrate of silver and gold. There is sulphur for the gathering, around the dead crater of the volcano you see from here, and charcoal we can make. You have the knowledge. Show your energy."

O'Donnell looked at the other in silence a moment.

"I wish I had yours," he said. "But I'll think over it. Maybe I remember how to make them. Maybe I don't. But even if we make powder and caps, where's the lead for bullets?"

"Take gold," answered Gilmore, laconically.

"These little fellows are the divil," ejaculated the Fenian chief. "He's got an answer every time. What d'ye say, my Harotahche? Will ye go with me?"

"Where my lord goes, is my place," said Harotahche.

"Then let's consult," said O'Donnell. "Supposin' I make the powder and bullets, how'll we get off?"

"We must wait till the next raid of Quahtemoczin," said Gilmore.

"But he'll make us go with him, maybe."

"Not he. He'll leave us in the valley."

"And how will that help us?"

"We'll note the way he goes. We will take the opposite direction, get to the Colorado, and escape to California."

"How'll we find the way?"

"We must trust to the sun and stars to guide us."

"And how will we get the girls along?"

Itana interrupted him.

"We can ride and walk as well as any white man. You forget whose daughters we are."

O'Donnell yawned deeply, as he said:

"Faix! I see ye're all against me, and bedad I hate to leave the place. Sure and we're in clover here. Why should we stir?"

"Have you forgotten Ireland, then?" asked Gilmore.

"Forgotten Ireland? Erin mavourneen? Never. But sure and I came here to get the Indians to help me. And now'll I do it, if I run away?"

"Do you think there's much chance of the Indians here helping you?" asked Gilmore, quietly.

"Divil a chance. Quahtemoczin's civil enough but I often think that old Ixtaquotl—bad luck to him!—manes to get us cut up into bits, for his dirty old war-god, if he gets a fair chance at us."

"I know that," said the Texan. "Itana has watched him, ever since our betrothal. He his hatching some devil's plot to entrap us, but what it is I can not tell yet."

"He only waits till my father leaves here on a raid into Mexico," said Itana. "He has the people on his side, and intends to stir up a mob, to murder us all."

"And maybe we're fools enough to wait," said O'Donnell, dryly. "Ye've said enough. I'll go to work this very day."

As he spoke, he slowly raised his huge frame from the ground, with a portentous yawn, and stretched himself. Gilmore, whose eye was remarkably quick, detected, under the assumed laziness of his manner, that something was the matter.

All of a sudden, the lazy colossus was transformed to a tiger. He gave a tremendous bound over the heads of Gilmore and Itana, and crashed into a thicket of low bushes behind them.

The Texan was on his feet in an instant, pistol in hand. He heard a terrible scuffle in the bushes, and the gurgling accents of a half-strangled man, imploring mercy.

The next minute the giant reappeared, dragging with him an Indian, whose long, black robe, smeared with rusty bloodstains, showed him to be one of the sacrificing priests of Quetzalcoatl. His countenance was livid with terror, as he trembled in the grasp of O'Donnell.

"Evesdroppin', ye divil, eh?" queried the Fenian, with a shake. "What were ye doin' here, ye thief?"

The cringing priest gurgled out some words in Aztec.

"Speak to him, Harotahche," said O'Donnell, in Spanish. "Find out what he is doing here. Tell him that if he doesn't make a clean breast of it, I'll cut the secret out of his heart and write it in blood on the ground."

And O'Donnell drew forth a huge knife which he flourished before the eyes of the priest, while Harotahche threatened him in Aztec.

The spy faltered out a long explanation, and as Harotahche listened, she looked disturbed.

"We are beset, my lord," she said. "This man tells me that we are, all of us, watched by the priests of Quetzalcoatl, under the orders of Ixtaquotl and Quahtemoczin."

"Quahtemoczin!" echoed Gilmore; "why should he watch us? Is he not our friend?"

Harotahche reported the priest's answer.

"Ixtaquotl has persuaded the chief to save his daughters' hair by your lives. He wishes to have healthy victims, as an acceptable sacrifice to Quetzalcoatl. You are to be deceived until the last day of the year. Quahtemoczin was unwilling, but the priest persuaded him at last."

O'Donnell and the Texan looked at each other in blank silence.

Harotahche only smiled, as if the whole thing were a joke.

At Harotahche's smile, O'Donnell looked surprised.

"Fear not, my lord," said the magnificent beauty. "We know the plot now; and we can defeat it. I, Harotahche, daughter of Quahtemoczin, have sworn that you shall not die. This fellow must be silenced. He may have understood us."

"Then why doesn't he talk Spanish?" asked Gilmore.

"He pretends not to understand it."

"Faith, and we'll soon find that out," observed O'Donnell.

He addressed the priest in Spanish: "Now, padre, let me tell you one thing. I'm going to cut ye up into small pieces, and boil ye for supper. I've not had a dacent male of fricasseed praste for a long time. Say the word, how ye'd like to be s'asoned. Onions and sage, chopped fine, are the best of dressin' for pork and goose, but ye look too thin for that. I'm blinkin' that if I was to stew ye down with milk, ye might be made tender after awhile. What d'ye say?"

The priest trembled violently, as he felt himself scanned by the eyes of the giant, and noted the care with which the other tested the edge of his knife with his thumb. He fell on his knees and spoke in perfectly good Spanish:

"Oh, great chief!" he faltered; "I only obeyed orders. We all love the children of the Sun, who delivered us from the anger of Quetzalcoatl, and slew the devil bears. But the

high priest will not be content till you are gone ; and Quah-temoczin fears the anger of the war-god, if you are not sacrificed."

"And, supposing we let you off, what would ye do?" asked the Fenian.

"I would be your slave forever," said the priest ; "and you would find me useful, great chief. I could tell you all the plans of your enemies, and—"

"I'll try you," said the Fenian, suddenly, looking into his eyes with a glance so keen, that the priest trembled, as if the other could read his soul. "But I'll take care that ye don't deceive me. Here !"

As he spoke, O'Donnell bared his mighty arm, and held it before the priest's face. With the point of his knife he pricked it sharply, till a thin, red stream of blood trickled forth.

"Drink !" he said, sternly, to the awestruck Indian. The latter, trembling and astonished, nevertheless obeyed. The giant stood regarding him keenly for a few moments, every one else standing in surprised silence, not knowing what was coming. In another minute O'Donnell pulled his arm away, and addressed the priest, who was still on his knees :

"Wretched man !" he said, solemnly. "You little know what you have done. You have become my slave to all eternity. *My blood flows in your veins.* Attempt to deceive me ; harbor one thought of treason in your heart, and on that very instant you will feel my blood turning into fire, that will consume your veins with fever, and leave you at the doors of death. You are mine, by this, and this, and this."

And as he spoke, he scattered the last few drops of blood over the kneeling Indian, and uttered several sonorous lines of Greek. The unknown language, the mysterious gestures of the giant, completely overawed the superstitious Indian, who cowered and shrunk, and appeared ready to faint with terror.

"Now go," said O'Donnell, calmly ; "and mind that you come every night to report to me what the cacique and the high priest are doing, or by the Great Spirit of the children of the Sun, who holds Quetzalcoatl in the palm of his hand, I will call down the storm from the mountains, and the

devil bear shall devour every man, woman and child in Tlalotla."

There was a deep silence, for a moment.

"Go!" suddenly roared O'Donnell, stamping his foot furiously. The terrified priest leaped to his feet and fled, never looking behind him.

"I'll trust him," observed the Irishman, with his old quizzical smile. "There's nothing like humbug with haythens eh, Gilmore?"

CHAPTER X.

SPOILING THE EGYPTIANS.

THE city of Tlalotla was all in an uproar. The war-drums were sounding from every tocalli. The streets were full of a surging multitude of people, through the midst of which files of horsemen were passing to the rendezvous, in the great central square.

There, Quahtemoczin sat on horseback, reviewing his forces as they gathered around him.

The Navahoes were away on a fresh raid, and all the warriors of the city and tribe were summoned.

Roderick O'Donnell and Gilmore stood on the summit of the Sun teocalli, watching the procession. They saw with pleasure that almost all the available force of the town was detailed for the raid.

"Now is our time," observed the Texan. "We shall never have as favorable an opportunity again. As soon as they are fairly off to the south, will be our time to escape, and that this very night."

"But what will the girls do?" asked O'Donnell. "We can defend ourselves, since we've made the ammunition; but how can we shelter them from the hardships of the mountains?"

"They are all ready to encounter them," said Gilmore. "I have taught Itana to shoot, and they have engaged to provide horses for all of us, and arms for themselves."

O'Donnell smiled.

"Sure, and it's a rare convenience to be betrothed to a prin-

cess," he observed. "They're jewels both of them. But what will we do with them, when we get back to civilization, Gilmore? They'll have to put up all that iligant back hair with a comb, and put on stays."

"Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," said the Texan. "We've got to *get back* to civilization yet. When we're there, something will turn up. But look!"

O'Donnell followed the direction of the gesture, and beheld the crowds slowly dispersing, while the long file of mounted Navahoes, nearly a thousand strong, rode off out of the city towards the south-east, to the passes that led into Mexico.

"A pleasant journey to ye, gentlemen!" said the Fenian, gayly; "and it's wishin', I am, that ye may go all the way to Durango, and get lots of scalps and plenty of cattle so long as ye don't ask Rory O'Donnell to stay with ye."

Gilmore interrupted him to point to the other end of the temple.

They stood in a corner of a most magnificent building, the temple of the Sun-god. The whole of the inside was covered with plates of pure gold, of enormous value. A huge image of the great luminary, at least twelve feet in diameter, the rays thickly studded with precious stones, attested the treasures lavished on their temples by the Navahoes.

The people were only allowed in there at certain seasons. At other times, the temple was sacred to the priests, and the family of the cacique.

Harotahche and Itana were approaching from the other side of the temple, and appeared to be hurried.

"Oh! my lord!" cried Harotahche, as she approached. "I have just seen Mattasca. We must fly this very night. The high priest has laid all his plans. The chief has left the city under his orders, and as soon as you hear the war-drum beaten at midnight, you may know that it is the signal for your sacrifice on the altar."

Both girls were dreadfully agitated, as they recounted the perils that environed their lovers. But O'Donnell seemed to be quite cool.

"I expected it," he said, quietly. "We should have gone to-night at all events. When is the old villain to sound the signal?"

"At midnight," she answered. "Oh! how shall we escape?"

Little Gilmore answered the question.

"We shall ride out of the city, one hour after sunset. *The signal will never be sounded.*"

Harotahche looked at him in surprise.

"But Ixtaquotl will sound it himself," she said. "He will watch to-night, all alone, in the mound-temple of Quetzalcoatl, in the lake. When he strikes the first drum, the whole city will arouse."

"He will never strike it," said the Texan.

"And who will prevent him?" asked she, incredulously.

"I will," said Gilmore, quietly.

Harotahche looked at him in amazement. Like all women, especially tall ones, she was disposed to look on little men with contempt. But her sister Itana came and twined her arm round the neck of her lover, and said:

"Trust him, sister. He will do it, if he says so."

O'Donnell supported her.

"Leave the little one alone. He has the best head of the party. We're in a hard case, and if any man can get us out, Little Gilmore's the man. I'm ready to obey his orders, for my part."

"Then listen to me," said the Texan. "Each of us must do his and her part. Harotahche and Itana, I look to you for this. One hour after sunset to-night, you must be on the shore of the lake opposite to the temple of Quetzalcoatl, with eight horses. You must be ready to ride as warriors, and you must bring the carbines that your father gave you. You will find the ammunition in our hiding-place in the palace. Four of the horses must be loaded with food and grain. We shall join you there."

"But I do not understand—" began Harotahche.

"It is not necessary to understand now, but to obey," said the Texan, gravely. "We must not be seen together to-day. Itana will obey me."

"That I will, my lord," said she, and at once left him. Harotahche followed her, after a moment's hesitation, and the two adventurers were left alone.

Gilmore no sooner saw the temple empty, than he coolly

advanced to the image of the sun, on the wall of the temple, and proceeded to detach, with the point of his bowie-knife, the different precious stones from the rays of that luminary.

"What are ye about, ye little divil?" cried O'Donnell, aghast. "Sure if the prastes were to come in now and see ye our lives wouldn't be worth a moment's purchase."

"Don't alarm yourself," replied Gilmore, quietly. "I'm only spoiling the Egyptians. You'll find these little trifles very acceptable, when we get back to civilization. There will be no priests in here before to-morrow, O'Donnell. And to-morrow we'll be close to the Colorado. If you fear them, you can watch for them, and strangle any one that comes in."

O'Donnell grinned.

"Ye're a cool hand, Gilmore," was all he said. "Hadn't ye better strip the temple of the Moon, too, while ye're at it?"

"Itana will do that for us," answered the Texan. "We have discussed the plan for some time. They don't admit men in the Moon teocalli. It's all full of silver and diamonds."

"I've said it before, and I'll say it again," said O'Donnell, snapping his fingers exultantly. "It's a rare convenience to be goin' to marry a princess, if she is a haythen. Go in, Gilmore. I'll help ye."

And the sacrilegious scamps proceeded to fill their pockets with emeralds, rubies, and sapphires of all sizes, the long accumulations of centuries, perhaps; saved from the ancient temples of Mexico many years before, when the Aztecs fled, from before their rapacious conquerors, to the secret recesses of the Sierra Madre.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RED LIGHT.

THAT same night all was dark and silent. The city of Tlalotla was unusually quiet. Not a light glimmered in the streets, not a moving form could be seen. Only on the summit of the great teocalli of Quahtemoczin, in the lake, a small, dim, red light glowed, like a lurid star.

About two hours after sunset, and just before the rising of the moon, a little past the full now, two figures emerged from the shadow of a wall near the center of the city.

This wall surrounded the palace of Quahtemoczin, and was washed by a canal on the east side.

The two figures came out from a small low postern door, and descended some steps to the water-side. One of the two men was of colossal proportions, the other very small and slight.

At the foot of the steps lay a long slender canoe, and in it was the figure of another man.

The two men stepped in, and sunk down. The almost inaudible dip of a paddle followed, and the canoe glided away down the canal, disappearing into the profound darkness, under the numerous bridges.

Not a word was spoken by any of its crew. Grim, silent, mysterious and shadowy, the little vessel swept along the watery way, shooting out at last into the open lake, where the stars, half obscured by a thin haze, every now and then peered forth, to see what was going on.

Hitherto only one had been propelling the canoe, but both of the passengers now produced paddles, which they dipped into the water; and the canoe shot ahead with great velocity. Its course was perfectly noiseless, however. It held on in a direct line for the island in the center of the lake, where the temple of the war-god, Quetzalcoatl, reared its frowning walls, crowned with the red light.

The canoe glided silently on, till it finally shot up into the

shadow of a landing-place, turned away from the city, where the bowman brought it up a longside, seizing a ring secured in the bottom step.

As they did so, a dark figure started from the shelter of a sort of lodge or summer-house, by the landing, and rushed down the steps waving his arms with forbidding gestures. The black-robed priest, for such he was, spoke vehemently, but in low, muffled tones, as if afraid of being overheard. He seemed to be warning the intruders away.

But the largest of the men in the boat suddenly seized him by the foot, as he approached them, and jerked him flat on his back in an instant, his skull striking on the broad flags, with stunning force.

"Now, Gilmore, up with ye!" said the giant O'Donnell, for it was he. "I'll go bail this spalpeen sha'n't make a noise."

As he spoke, with an exertion of his enormous strength that few men were capable of, he dragged the half-insensible priest to the canoe, and deliberately held him, head down, in the water, to strangle in silence.

While he did so, the light figure of Little Gilmore bounded ashore, and flitted silently up the steps of the teocalli. The little Texan held in his hand a long, sharp bowie-knife, in whose use he was almost as well skilled as with the pistol. He glanced warily from side to side. The priest on guard at the bottom of the steps had been a damper on his plans, and might cause them to miscarry, if there were more there. He had expected to find Ixtaquotl all alone.

However, as he advanced, and found every thing deserted, he recovered his composure.

The ascent of the teocalli ran spirally around the mound, in a series of irregular steps. It was bordered with heavy thickets of evergreens, and still as death. As the Texan advanced, he held his knife ready, prepared to attack any one who might be lurking under the border of bushes. But every thing was still. Only the light echo of his own cautious footsteps caught his ear. Up and still up he went, every sense sharpened to the utmost, keeping at the side of the path, and halting frequently to listen. In this way he gradually went on, till he found himself at the edge of the broad plateau that

encircled the temple. There it stood, dark and silent, its massive walls crested with a feathery border of vegetation, that had been gradually accumulating there for centuries. Gilmore had lost sight of the red light.

From its position, as seen from below, he judged it to be the other end of the temple, close to the great sacrificial stone, on which the victims of the war-god were immolated.

He halted for a moment. Then he stooped down, and slipped off his boots, and stole forward barefooted as noiselessly as a cat. He went straight forward to the temple, and in another moment stood in one of the low doorways.

The temple was of the simplest construction, being an oblong hall, surrounded by low, massive walls pierced with doorways. The further end was open, one or two square pillars alone intercepting the view of the great sacrificial stone outside.

The Texan felt his heart beat quick, as he caught the outline of the rugged mass of stone, the top slightly convex, on which to stretch the human victim, ready for the sacrificial knife.

Standing on the summit of the stone, his long, scarlet robes hardly visible in the intense darkness, was a solitary priest, gazing toward the mountains, whence the moon was to rise in a short time. Beyond him was reared a tall pole, at the top of which swung a red lantern of some kind. At the foot of the pole rested an enormous bass-drum, whose head was fully six feet in diameter.

Gilmore took in all these objects in an instant. The next, he was gliding forward through the dark temple to the priest. He recognized the meager figure of Ixtaquotl, and saw every thing ready for the signal.

The priest, Matlasca, had fully informed him of the signal. If the red light was *lowered*, and the drum silent, the sacrifice was to be put off. If the light stood, and the drum was sounded, the place was to be surrounded, and the Christians brought to the temple for a moonlight offering to the god, Quetzalcoatl.

Gilmore stole noiselessly forward, his eye fixed on the high priest. The latter stood like a statue, watching the east. The Texan flitted along in the shadow of the wall, and soon stood by the entrance.

Then, watching his chance, he rapidly crossed the open space behind the other's back, and stood at the foot of the pole, by the war-drum.

Adroitly as it was done, the slight rustle of his garments caught the sharp ear of Ixtaquotl, who turned, and spoke angrily in Aztec, thinking it the guard.

The quick-witted Texan availed himself of the delay. He seized the heavy club that lay by the side of the drum, and cast it over the bank behind him. Then, feeling for the cord on which the lantern hung, with a single cut of the keen knife, he divided it. The red light fell to the ground, and lay at his feet, just as the first glow of the rising moon stole over the summits of the distant sierra.

The high priest, for the first time, seemed to realize that treason was round him. He leaped from the altar, and advanced on the Texan, with the great sacrificial knife gleaming in his hand. Gilmore stooped and picked up the lantern which lay at his feet, not extinguished as it happened. Flashing the red light on the priest's face, he sprung toward him, knife in hand.

Ixtaquotl growled out some furious words in his strange language, and struck at the Texan.

But the latter, well used to contests of the kind, and prepared for it, was more than a match for the old priest.

With a wonderful activity—the fruit of long practice—he bounded into the air as he went, and planted both heels on the old priest's chest, sending him flying several feet, with all the breath knocked out of him in the rude shock.

Running over to him he found the old man trying to struggle up, with fury and revenge in his glance. He struck at Gilmore wildly and ineffectually, and the next moment the keen blade of the latter sunk deep in the back of his neck as he stumbled over. The thrust was put in the place where the matador strikes. Ixtaquotl dropped stone dead, without a struggle.

The Texan surveyed him for a moment, and sighed.

"I hope it is the last," he muttered; "I hope it is the last. What would I not give to be guiltless of blood!"

He stooped down and wiped his knife carefully on the garments of the dead priest, and returned it to its sheath.

"Nothing worth taking here," he muttered, as he looked around at the temple: "they don't spend much gold on—Hullo!"

He broke off, as he involuntarily looked at the lantern he held. He examined it with great care, aided by the rising moon.

"Heavens and earth!" he muttered, excitedly. "This may be worth all the jewels of the sun and moon."

And he was right.

This red lantern, whose color had puzzled him so, was a wonder of richness.

It was of small size, but the frame and oil-cup were of solid gold, and the red panes were composed of a conglomeration of rubies, whose aggregate value must be enormous, on account of their size and luster.

Little Gilmore laughed softly.

"The gods help those who help themselves," he said. "It's time I was off."

He went up to the war-drum, and passed his knife across it, with two great cuts.

"They'll find it hard to make much noise with you," he said, laughing. "So, good-by, Quetzalcoatl."

And the little adventurer turned, and ran down the temple without any more precautions. He put on his boots and rapidly descended the path to the water, with the red light in his hand. He found O'Donnell and Matlasca waiting for him in silence.

"What have you done with the priest?" he asked them.

"The alligators have got him," answered the giant, coolly. "Sure it's better they should ate him than he ate us. And the spalpeen was only waitin' for a fair chance to do the same."

Gilmore shuddered, but made no reply. He stepped into the canoe, and the vessel glided away. The red light lay in the stern of the canoe.

Gilmore could see Matlasca, in the bow, casting glances of terror and amazement upon him. The superstitious Indian had recognized the sacred lamp of Quetzalcoatl, and trembled at the profanity of the sacrilegious thief.

The Texan troubled himself but little on this point how

ever, trusting to the still greater fears of the Indian, under O'Donnell's ruse, to keep him faithful.

The canoe glided on to the opposite bank of the lake, furthest from Tlalotla, where they expected the two girls to be in waiting for them, with the horses.

At this point the mountains came straight down to the side of the water, only leaving a narrow beach, save in one place. A little bay was the exception, formed by the outlet of a mountain torrent, now dry and dusty, and making a rugged pathway up the rocks. As they entered the little bay, Gilmore uttered a whistle, which was answered from the shore.

In the light of the moon, which shone right up the line of the gully, a group of horses could be perceived.

In a few moments more the canoe grated on the beach, and the adventurers were clasped in the arms of Harotahche and Itana.

Gilmore leaped ashore, bearing with him the precious red light, which had been of such importance, and neither of the men noticed, that, while they were greeting the girls, the canoe was gliding away.

O'Donnell was the first to see it, when Matlasca was already a hundred yards from the shore. He ran to the water's edge, shouting to the Indian to come back. But Matlasca, without reply, plied his paddle with tremendous energy, and shot off in the direction of Tlalotla.

O'Donnell raised his rifle, and was about to fire, when he was arrested by the voice of Gilmore.

"Don't shoot, O'Donnell! Don't shoot! We shall have an hour to spare if you let him go. If you fire you'll rouse the whole city. They're watching now, I make no doubt."

O'Donnell sulkily put down the rifle.

"I could have put him out of conceit with himself in another minute," he replied. "But you're captain, now. Have it your own way. Maybe ye'll be sorry ye didn't kill him, before we're through. What'll we do now?"

"Mount and be off," replied the Texan, briefly.

"And have ye any idea where ye're goin'?" demanded O'Donnell.

"Certainly. We are now in some part of the Rocky

Mountains, as yet totally unexplored. Somewhere to the west of us lies the Little Colorado, and the Great Colorado of the west. A United States expedition is coming up that river now, with a steamboat. If we can connect with it somewhere, we shall be safe."

"And how'll we find it?" asked the Fenian.

"Not by waiting here to be taken," said Gilmore, quietly "We must follow this stream, or rather the bed, to its source. Any other running west must take us to the Colorado."

As he spoke he advanced to his own horse, with its old saddle embossed with silver, which was held for him by the beautiful Itana. The faithful creature, fat and hearty after its long rest, greeted him with a joyful neigh.

The two girls were so transformed as to be almost unrecognizable. Their luxuriant hair was wound into a tight coil, and bound fast around the head like a turban. Eagle-feathers were arranged in coronets around their foreheads, and they were otherwise accoutered as Indian warriors, carbine and bow at back, lance in hand.

O'Donnell mounted the gray charger on which he had come to grief once before. But the animal looked different now, after good rest and food. It was a tall, heavily built horse, half-bred between Conestoga and the mustang, and the only sort of creature that would have stood his weight.

"Now then," observed Gilmore. "Let each lead a horse, and let us make the best of our way up this path."

They rode off, each rider having a led horse beside him loaded with provisions and grain. In the country into which they were penetrating they knew not how long they might be, before they found either.

They rode on up the torrent bed, at a brisk pace. The moon rose higher and higher every moment, lighting up the rugged gorge, till it was as light as day.

As they ascended, the rocks on each side grew more and more perpendicular, at the same time being lower. The path became narrower and more rugged, till at last it ceased altogether, leaving them at the foot of a step of rock, about four feet high, with the bare mountain side above and around them. They were compelled to dismount here, and haul their horses up by the bridles.

The animals, relieved of all weight on their backs, scrambled up with some difficulty, and they stood among rocks and *débris* of all kinds with no guide where to go.

An exclamation from Itana attracted their attention. She had turned, and was looking back and down towards Tlalotla. The lake glittered in the rays of the full moon, and a dull, booming sound reached their ears where they stood.

"It is the war-drums! They have alarmed the city!" said Itana.

As they continued to gaze, a hundred dark specks shot out from the city, and advanced rapidly to the bay at the foot of the mountain.

It was the canoes of a multitude of pursuers.

The fugitives rode off around the mountain-top, in a westerly direction, without any guide but the stars.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BLACK CANON.

THE Colorado of the West is perhaps the most wonderful river in the world. For fifteen hundred miles it flows, a navigable river, between perpendicular cliffs, two thousand feet in height, perfectly inaccessible. At one spot, Big Cañon, the river bed lies five thousand feet below the surface of the country above. A wall of rock, *nearly a mile high*, and as smooth as the side of a house, hems in the stream in this marvelous passage.

But perhaps the most tremendous scene of all, awful in its grandeur and sublimity of desolation, is that known as El Cañon Negro, or Black Cañon.

At this place the river has cut its way down through a bed of basaltic rocks, as black as jet, wearing it away into jutting columns, half a mile high, resembling the Giant's Causeway in Ireland in appearance, but on a scale immeasurably vaster and more sublime.

Several paths wind along the face of the cliffs on either

side, marking the steps where the stream once rested, thousands of years ago.

On the summit of these tremendous walls, some days after the occurrences just related, a stalwart hunter of the old mountain type, was seated by a little fire, cooking a large piece of buffalo-hump.

His long rifle lay beside him on the ground, and he seemed to be taking his ease. Behind him rose a second wall of rocks, about six feet in height, which sheltered him from view from the prairie behind. This stretched away for several miles, terminating in the sierra, whose snowy tops pierced the sky, all around. From where he sat he could command a view of the whole of the Black Cañon, at whose foot the white line of foam marked the course of the river. The old hunter appeared to be interested in something that was going on beneath him. He neglected his meat, a rare thing for the methodical mountain man, while he watched the cañon below.

At last the smell of the burning flesh forced itself on his nostrils, and he turned round, to behold the long, wooden spit nearly burnt in two, and the fat meat blazing away merrily.

"Darn my skin!" exclaimed the hunter. "I b'lieve you're a-gittin' kinder foolish in yer old age, Bill Wilson. Lettin' good meat burn, while ye're mindin' other folkses biz."

He snatched away the blazing meat as he spoke, and proceeded to blow out the flames, grumbling at himself all the while. At last he succeeded in making the meat presentable, by cutting away the singed parts, and began to devour it with mountain relish.

While he was masticating, however, he did not forget to keep a sharp look-out over the edge of the cliff, and beheld a very remarkable panorama enacted, for his edification, during breakfast.

Below him, and on the same side of the river, there were three successive stages in the rock, each of which must have been about twenty feet in width. From the immense depth at which they were, they looked like sheep-paths.

These three stages ran in diagonal lines across the face of the cliff, two of them following the course of the river, and the other running up-stream.

But all these finally met together at one point, about a

thousand feet below, and merged into a broad, natural road, smooth and convenient, that sloped down-stream, and finally reached the water just at the exit of Black Cañon.

On the upper of these paths, which came down from the prairie, some two miles back, was a long line of Indian horsemen, whose striped *serapés* told the hunter that they were Navahoes.

They were about fifty in number, and headed by a tall chief, with remarkably long hair, which flowed down his back over the horse's croup. The Indian horses all looked jaded, and had evidently traveled fast and far.

On the second path, which was intermediate, and running in the opposite direction, there was but a single object. Several jutting columns of basalt hid this path, and the object thereon, from the sight of any persons on the other two natural roads.

This object was an immense grizzly-bear, of unusually light color, and equally unusual size.

"Gee—hoshaphat!" muttered the hunter as he surveyed the beast. "That 'ere mout be the daddy of every grizzly in the mountains."

And he whistled, for want of words to express his feelings.

On the third and lowest path, which ran nearly level, was a little party of horsemen, with some led beasts, but they were so far off, that the hunter could only distinguish that they were four in number, with eight horses.

But the Indians on the upper path evidently saw them, themselves unseen by them.

The great grizzly was leisurely pursuing his way down his own particular path, swinging his enormous head from side to side, and unconscious of his approaching enemies. They, on their part, were equally unsuspecting.

Far away, at the very entrance of the cañon, the hunter could see another object, very remarkable in that wild locality, a small, stern-wheeled steamboat, lying at the foot of the rapids she was unable to ascend.

This caused no surprise, however, in the hunter's mind, inasmuch as the boat belonged to the exploring expedition to which he was attached, as hunter and guide.

He continued his observations of the scene below.

It was evident, from the route and pace pursued by the parties below, that they would probably meet together at the junction of the paths, at about the same time, unless something unforeseen occurred.

"Gosh!" muttered Billy Wilson, as he watched the party on the lowest path; "if I only know'd who they war, I mout help 'em. But darned if I know who they are at this distance. They may be only Injuns, and they may be whites. If I had one of them 'ere peep-glasses, I'd soon tell. 'Tain't none o' my biz, to be sure, but I hate to see feller-critters a-runnin' in among them cussed Navahoes, without lettin' 'em know it. Them Navahoes is cusses any way, and I guess I mout as well help pitch in for the weakest side. Bill Wilson, ye always war a soft-headed old fool, and you'll get yer gizzard split some day with yer cussed meddlin' in other folk's biz. Howsumdever—" and here he rose to his feet, and took his rifle. "Durned if I kin stand by and see it done."

And the old hunter started on a dog-trot along the top of the cliffs, down-stream, till he reached a deep cleft in the rocks, formed by the two jutting columns of basalt.

The place was evidently well known to him, for he entered this cleft, which ran perpendicularly down into the earth, almost fifty feet back of the edge of the cliff, and then descended, in a series of steps, each about ten feet high, till it emerged at last in the face of the cliff below.

The old hunter vanished from sight, and silence reigned on the top of the cliffs.

Meanwhile, on the first of the paths below, the Indians rode cautiously along. Quahtemoczin himself, cacique of Tlalotla, rode at their head, his face stern and anxious. He had been recalled from his raid by a special messenger, telling of the escape of the white men, and had been riding night and day, to make up for the great start that the fugitives had gained.

By taking a shorter route to the Colorado, known to himself, he had succeeded in gaining this upper path, at the time that the fugitives were entering the lower one.

Quahtemoczin's heart was burning with hatred and revenge. He saw his power insulted; his most sacred treasures pilfered; his own flesh and blood conspiring to rob him; and he was nearly beside himself with fury.

He felt that his revenge was certain, but that he must not hurry too much, as his jaded horses were in no condition for a chase. So he rode slowly along, lance in hand, every now and then glancing over the cliff, below which his prey was approaching him, so unsuspectingly.

The long file of Navahoe warriors were crouched forward on their horses' necks, ready, at a signal, to spur to the charge, amidst a flight of arrows.

The junction of the three paths appeared before them, at a short distance off, while Quahtemoczin halted.

It was essential to get close enough to the fugitives to shoot their horses, before alarming them.

The cacique dismounted, and his warriors followed his example. Leaving the horses behind, under the guardianship of a dozen Indians, the rest crept forward, behind the crest of the parapet of rock, and laid themselves down in ambush to wait for the fugitives.

Their bows ready strung, and the arrows notched, they awaited the signal from the cacique.

The party below were coming leisurely along, thinking their danger nearly over. They had reached the Colorado at last, and had heard from some Mohave Indians, met on the road, that the American expedition was just below Black Cañon.

O'Donnell rode in the advance, on his big gray horse, still accoutered in the gay vestments of a Navahoe chief. His four-ounce rifle lay on the pommel of the saddle before him, and he was singing gayly, and talking nonsense to Harotahche, who rode beside him.

Quahtemoczin ground his teeth with rage, as he saw the handsome black-bearded giant beside the gloriously beautiful warrior figure of the Navahoe maiden.

All her long hair was unbound again, and flowing down on either side of the horse, till it fell below the stirrup.

Behind this pair, rode the slight figure of little Gilmore and Itana, as good a match, as great a contrast, as the other two in front. All were talking and laughing.

"Ah! jewel!" O'Donnell was saying; "and it's the iligant weddin' we'll have, please the pigs, when we get to San Francisco. There won't be a bride in the United States, no, nor

in ould Ireland either, as 'll compare to ye in beauty, l'avin' alone all the rest of the things. Sure, and if the blessed Virgin was to come down from heaven, this blessed minute, she'd take you for her twin-sister."

Harotahche was making some laughing reply, when the voice of Little Gilmore, sharp and clear, cut the air behind her.

"'Ware grizzly!" he cried. "Heavens, O'Donnell! It's the old devil again!"

Song and jest ceased in a moment.

There, in the front of them, on the only path forward, just rounding an angle of the rock, was the well-known and equally dreaded form of the devil-grizzly. There he was, marching straight toward them, surprised, but evidently pleased at the encounter.

A malevolent grin of diabolical intelligence overspread his hideous face, as he opened his mouth. More hideous than ever was it now, for the teeth on one side were partially knocked out, and a horrible gap appeared between the jaws, marking the track of O'Donnell's four-ounce bullet, a few months before.

The whole party stopped spell-bound, for one instant, gazing at the enormous brute, taller than any of their horses, who came steadily forward, turning not to right or left.

Gilmore broke the silence first, as he urged his horse to the front.

"For shame!" he cried. "Did we face him, wounded, and on foot; and shall we not face him now? To your arms!"

As he spoke, he snatched from Itana the short carbine she carried.

"Your pouch," he said, briefly; "and keep back."

She handed him the pouch, and reined back silently. But Harotahche was not so tame.

"I will not go back," she said, as O'Donnell urged her to retire. "I will share my lord's perils, and if he dies, I die too."

There was no time for more, when the devil-grizzly marched forward to the assault. His manner of attack was different from before. When they had last seen him, he had charged

at full speed. Now he was content to advance slowly, halting every now and then.

The Navahoes, on the path above, could not yet see the grizzly. They observed the strangers halt, but could not tell the reason. The jutting rocks concealed the bear. They feared that it was other Indians, ready to take their prey from them.

Quahtemoczin gave the signal. Instantly the whole band rose with a ferocious yell, and a terrible volley of arrows was shot into the party, at close quarters. But it was not at the riders those arrows were shot. It was at the horses. The poor beasts were riddled through and through in an instant, and either reared upright in a last struggle, or dropped to the ground without a quiver.

In another moment the whole of the war-party of Navahoes was running down the rocks, or dropping over the parapet on to their helpless prey.

But there was worse than a lion in the path.

The devil-grizzly, fierce and more dangerous than any lion, came rushing into the midst of the fray, with a terrible snarl of rage.

The effect of his presence was wonderful.

The Indians, who were rushing down to the junction of the paths to intercept the fugitives, suddenly halted, palsied with terror.

Those who had dropped over the rocks below, and were running to the fallen horses, hearing the terrible beast coming, turned and saw him, and dropped flat on their faces, half dead with fear.

The white men alone, so suddenly assaulted, tried to extricate themselves from their fallen animals, to defend themselves.

They had succeeded in doing this, and were drawing together for defense, when the echo of a shot, fired from the path *beyond them*, surprised every one.

A red spirt of blood from the flank of the devil-grizzly showed who was hit by the ball, and the great beast turned round with a savage snarl of rage, to see whence the blow came.

The figure of old Billy Wilson was to be plainly seen, **some way up the path**, quietly reloading his rifle.

It is a peculiarity of the grizzly bear, always to turn on its last assailant. The devil-grizzly turned at once, and rushed up the the path after the figure of the stranger.

They could see the man reloading his rifle, till the bear was within a hundred yards of him, when he suddenly disappeared, as it seemed into the face of the rock.

O'Donnell uttered a cry of surprise, but he had no time for more.

The Navahoes, relieved of their most dreaded enemy by the disappearance of the bear, which had followed the stranger, at once resumed their attack on the fugitives.

Before the latter could realize what was the matter, they were surrounded by the whole party, with arrows pointed at them, and were summoned to surrender by the stern voice of Quahtemoczin.

Had Gilmore and O'Donnell been alone, they would most probably have resisted to the death. The little Texan's pistols were already out, and he was calculating how many he could stretch out before he fell himself, when the two girls threw themselves before their lovers and implored them to surrender.

O'Donnell sulkily obeyed, and Gilmore, seeing that any resistance must cost the lives of those so dear to them, threw down his pistols angrily.

Then Quahtemoczin spoke; and his voice was low and stern.

"White men," he said, "you call yourselves children of the Sun. You have put scorn on Tlalotla, and on Quahtemoczin. You have stolen away like thieves in the night, and committed sacrilege in the temple. You have stolen the sacred lamp of Quetzalcoatl, and slain the high priest Ixtaquotl. You have stolen away the daughters of Quahtemoczin, and taught them to speak with a forked tongue. Can you tell me aught, why you should not be slain, as a sacrifice to the insulted gods?"

Gilmore it was who answered.

"Do with us as you will," he said, calmly. "I told you that I would just as soon die, long ago."

"The white warrior says truth," said Quahtemoczin, gravely. "He is a brave man, and he shall die by the hand of a war-

rior. To-morrow, at the rising of the sun, you shall both die. Quahtemoczin's hand, and no meaner one, shall offer your hearts to the Sun you have offended."

And he ordered them to be bound.

CHAPTER XIII.

BILLY WILSON'S LITTLE GAME.

WE must return to the old mountain-man, whose sudden appearance and hasty shot had been the cause of the diversion of the devil-grizzly's attack, just in the nick of time.

When Billy Wilson dropped himself into the cleft of the rocks, it was with the air of one who knew the place well. He did so in fact, having descended the cliff in the same manner, many times before, along with the friendly Mohave Indians, to whom it was a known by-path.

It descended in a series of steps, each about ten feet deep, and not more than four broad, the width of the cleft in places being less than two feet, but averaging about three. The Indians had cut rude steps in the face of the rock, to facilitate the ascent and descent; and at the last place of all, which made a drop of about twenty feet, they had put down a rude ladder.

Billy descended the cleft with great rapidity, and when he emerged at the bottom upon the broad path, he found that he had arrived just in time to see the fight.

His instincts as a hunter, and a certain dare-devil spirit without much thought about it, made him throw up his rifle and send a bullet into the grizzly bear.

But even while in the act of reloading hurriedly, his quick eye, glancing over the fray, detected the fact that he had been an unwitting assistant of the Indians.

"Billy Wilson, ye darned fool!" he muttered, as he rammed down a bullet with spiteful emphasis. "Other folkses biz 'll bring you to grief yet, ye old hunks!"

But he had no time for further self-objurgation, as the devil-

grizzly was already approaching him at full speed, snarling and open-mouthed.

Billy Wilson threw his rifle over his shoulder, and darted into the cleft, hastily climbing the ladder that led up the last fall of twenty feet.

He only had time to reach the top at his best speed, when the ferocious growl of the devil-grizzly was heard at the mouth of the cleft.

Billy stood up on the platform, and watched his enemy. The lower entrance to the cleft was about four feet wide, and the huge form of the grizzly filled it completely from side to side. The monster came rushing up to the foot of the wall of rock, and roared aloud with baffled rage.

The hunter knew that he was safe. All the natural and acquired recklessness of a life of adventure impelled him to stay where he was, and brave the devil-grizzly. He leaned over the rock, and called out taunts of all kinds to the infuriated beast, whose position was so cramped, that it could not turn in the narrow passage. The devil-grizzly reared on his hind-legs, and stretched himself up the rock in vain, trying to reach the top. He came more than half-way, and had he had room to spring, might have reached the hunter. But the latter, seeing that he was powerless to come further, amused himself with picking up little fallen fragments of rocks, and throwing them in the bear's face.

The animal was perfectly frantic with impotent rage, and the hunter took fresh delight in teasing it. At last, however, he reflected that he might never have so fair a chance to shoot the bear again, and with that thought he picked up his rifle.

Some sort of diabolical intelligence appeared to actuate the bear however. As soon as he saw the rifle, he appeared to realize that he had no chance in such an uneven game. Before the hunter could find time to take an aim, the bear had backed away from him, several feet, leaping up and down in a manner to prevent any regular shot.

Billy Wilson drew a bead on him, however, and fired. But the ball, which was aimed at his head, struck the skull at such an angle that it glanced off; and the devil-grizzly, roaring and snarling with rage and pain, backed out of the passage, and stood outside to wait for the hunter.

The latter saw himself cut off from all egress in this, the regular direction, and concluded to retrace his steps to the upper earth.

As he toiled on in his upward course, he grumbled away to himself as usual.

"Pretty figure you've made o' yourself this day, Bill Wilson! Missed a grizzly twice runnin', and no 'scuse. Now ye'll hev to git up to the ground ag'in, the best way you know how, when ye mout hev staid thar. And if yer hadn't gone to shootin' at that 'ere darned old critter, the beast mout 'a' kerflummoxed the Injins, and let the white folks go. White folks they was, as sure as eggs is eggs. And them darned Navahoes has got 'em, by this time. And they'll have them roastin' too, before long, if I can't do something to resky them. Guess the cap'n 'll let the sojers help, if he hears of the prisoners. Anyway I kin but ax him."

Muttering thus, the kind-hearted old hunter toiled on his upward path, by the rude way hewn by the Indians. The sun was two or three hours high, when he reached the top at last, and struck off over the cliffs, in the direction of the distant steamer.

Meanwhile the devil-grizzly was prowling up and down on the path, at the entrance of the cleft. The great beast growled angrily to himself every now and then, shaking his great head, as he passed and repassed, and meditating vengeance for his wounds.

He looked up the cleft savagely, as he saw the slowly-receding figure of the hunter, and realized that it was no use waiting any longer.

At last he suddenly turned, and lumbered off down the path, to the scene of the late conflict or surprise.

The great beast found it untenanted, save by the carcasses of six dead horses. He smelt at the bodies for a few moments, but finally turned away disdainfully. He was hungry for vengeance, not for food. He made a circuit of the place, snuffing the earth suspiciously, and at last turned off, on the upper path on which the file of Quahtemoczin's warriors had taken the back track.

Nothing was in sight, however. The devil-grizzly pursued his way deliberately, snuffing at the track and determined to

attack any living creature he found. His temper, never very amiable, was irritated to frenzy now, and he would have charged a whole army if it stood in the way. So he went on, following the broad path, for about a couple of miles, till it finally emerged upon the prairie above.

Arrived there, his glance, roving ahead, descried the objects of his search, a small cavalcade crossing the prairie, while the head of the column was entering another rift in the surface of the plain, which announced the existence of a second deep cañon, running into Black Cañon near its mouth, and at the entrance to which the little steamer, "Explorer," was lying.

The devil-grizzly showed his teeth in a grin of malignity, as he lumbered off after the party, which he felt sure he had in his power. Animals reason as well as men, and the bear seemed to know that there was but one narrow path up this cross cañon, so that the prey could not escape him. He abandoned the track, and struck a bee-line for the spot at which the Indians, with their captives, were entering the pass. Before the last Indian had disappeared into the pass, the bear had covered half the distance.

About the same time the devil-grizzly started on his gallop, Billy Wilson reached the end of Black Cañon, where Cross Cañon entered it. The little steamer lay below, with her crew variously employed. Several officers and citizen employees were perched at different places on the rocks, sketching the tremendous outlines of the Black Cañon.

Billy Wilson rapidly descended the face of the cliff, by a rugged Indian path, barely practicable, and sought out the captain in command of the expedition, to whom he told his story and at once demanded a dozen men, to go to the rescue of the white prisoners.

"It ar' Navahoes as has got 'em, cap," he said. "Them's the bloodiest varmints on the plains, them Navahoes. They eats their prisoners, darned ef they don't, cap. And I'll swear as how 'twar white folkses as I seen."

"But how are you certain of catching them, Wilson?" demanded the officer. "I can not allow my men to go off on any long chase, and diminish the guard of the expedition."

"We won't be gone more nor an hour, cap. I seen the

bloody varmints strikin' across the perary above hyar, and they kin only foller the trail they come by, which must lead 'em into Cross Cañon, 'bout a mile above hyar. Only lend me a boat, and a dozen men, with them pesky seven-shooters, and I'll engage to be back in two hours with the prisoners. Them Navahoes ain't only got bows and arrows."

"Well, Wilson," said the captain, after a few moments' deliberation, "if you will give me your word to be back before noon, which will give you nearly three hours, I'll let you go, and give you the men. But mind you, don't lose any of them, for I am responsible for them."

"All right, cap," replied the delighted hunter.

He went forward among the men, calling for volunteers to rescue white men from the torture. Fifty voices were raised in an instant. The whole expedition volunteered bodily. But Bill Wilson selected only twelve of the most reliable men; and putting them in the copper lifeboat attached to the expedition, the party pulled off up the course of Cross Cañon, to intercept the Indians at a point above, where Billy knew that a waterfall existed.

Some time after the boat had started on its mission of deliverance, the great grizzly reached the top of the narrow pass leading into the cañon. He saw the long file moving along at a walk, on the narrow road, the foremost horseman of the file just disappearing around the angle of a rock that stood out from the cliff, boldly outlined against the face of the white waterfall.

The rest of the procession wound peacefully along on its quiet course toward the head of Cross Cañon.

The devil-grizzly paused for a moment, and then lumbered off down the path, growling savagely.

As he did so, the echo of a shot from the gorge below struck on his ear, followed by a confusion of shouts and yells, and reports of firearms.

The bear rushed on, faster than ever, to join the strife

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BATTLE OF CROSS CANON.

WHEN Quahtemoczin took up his march homeward, it was in the following order :

1st. At the head of all, he rode himself, followed by ten warriors.

2d. Matlasca, the renegade priest, who had betrayed both parties, rode in front of O'Donnell and Gilmore, whose hands were tied, and who walked behind. The two girls, disarmed, but otherwise free, remained on horseback, and came next.

3d. Forty warriors brought up the rear.

In this order they rode up the broad path, across the face of Black Cañon, and entered the prairie above.

The caçique had not yet searched the prisoners. Gilmore, in consequence, still carried the sacred lamp of Quetzalcoatl, hidden under his *serapé*. The only articles the Indians had seized were Gilmore's pistols, O'Donnell's huge rifle, and the short Mexican carbines carried by the two girls.

The two white men were much depressed in spirit at the manner of their capture. They had been so secure but a moment before, and had fallen so suddenly, that it seemed like a miserable dream.

Gilmore was the first to recover himself as they walked along. The quickwitted little Texan began to revolve plans of escape. He thought that they were so near to the expedition on the river, that if he could only get away alone, he could bring succor to his companions.

A thought occurred to him, which he made haste to communicate to O'Donnell in English.

"Do you see who's in front of us, O'Donnell?" he said, in a low tone of voice that was half lost in the trampling of the horses.

"I do that, the blackguard!" said the Fenian, savagely. "I told ye, ye'd be a sad man for bein' soft-hearted enough to spare him. Maybe ye'll believe me now?"

"Work on his feelings," said Gilmore, rapidly. "Don't look at me. They'll notice it, and separate us. Tell him some of that stuff about blood and fire, and get him to lend us a knife next halt."

They were passing over the open prairie, when Gilmore said these words, under his breath. Matlasca caught the sound of a voice, and turned sharply in his saddle.

"No talking," he said, brutally, in Spanish.

Gilmore looked up at him significantly, and smiled in a mysterious manner, nodding his head sagaciously.

"You are right, Matlasca," he answered. "Talking will not help you long. The blood in your veins is turning to fire."

Matlasca smiled derisively.

"The children of the Sun are fools," he answered. "The new high-priest of Quetzalcoatl has given me a charm, which will protect me from the fire-drop."

"But not from the *evil eye*," said Gilmore, solemnly. "I have fixed it upon thee, Matlasca; and this very night thou diest, in such tortures as fire is nothing to."

Matlasca looked disturbed, but tried to laugh it off.

"These are tales for children," he said.

"Not so," said Gilmore, still more solemnly. "Even now I see the spell begin to work upon thee. There is a gnawing at thy vitals that thou canst not quench."

"It is only hunger," faltered Matlasca.

Gilmore had made a bold guess at this, knowing that the cacique had ridden far without food.

"It is no hunger," he said. "It is the fire-drop that begins to work. Before to-morrow's sun shall rise, thou shalt woe that thou wert roasting at the fires of the Sun-god, for thou shalt howl with a worse torture. I have said."

And he walked on in dignified silence, leaving the spell to work.

O'Donnell had kept perfectly silent during this conversation, and the two girls, riding behind, understood what was going on, and exchanged glances.

The march was kept up in silence over the green prairie for some little distance. Matlasca cast uneasy glances at both of the prisoners, but did not speak.

Every time he looked, he met the eyes of both.

Gilmore nodded and smiled every time, in a still more mysterious and triumphant manner.

O'Donnell looked grave and magisterial, shook his head slowly, and waved his immense beard from side to side.

Matlasca grew scared at last.

He could not ride away. He had been ordered to stay there. He could not escape from the eyes of the two men, and their mysterious gestures.

And every moment that he remained under the mesmeric influence augmented his terror. He fancied that the pains in his stomach were increasing with fearful rapidity. The pangs of hunger became those of superstition.

At last he turned to O'Donnell, who, to his eye, seemed the least implacable of his spiritual foes.

"What shall I do, señor?" he whispered.

O'Donnell shook his head, solemnly.

"I can not help you," he said. "*That* is the great medicine-man of all, who lives in the sun. All your tribe can not slay him. You will see," and he nodded at Gilmore.

Matlasca was silent. The procession passed on, till it came to the edge of Cross Cañon, where the Indians halted for a moment.

Quahtemoczin sent forward thirty of his warriors here, to go first, following himself, next in front of Matlasca.

During the delay occasioned by this change, Matlasca approached Gilmore, unobserved.

"What shall I do, señor?" he muttered, imploringly.

Gilmore indicated his hands bound behind him.

"Drop your knife," he said, quietly.

Matlasca hesitated.

"If not," said the unblushing Texan, "instead of *to-morrow* you shall die *to-night*." And he made a terrible grimace, and muttered several English words, as if in invocation.

Matlasca's knife dropped on the ground instantly.

Harotahche and Itana, ready witted and brave, closed up to hide Gilmore from the gaze of the Indians, as he stooped and raised the weapon with his bound hands. The folds of his *aerapé* covered every thing a moment after.

When they started again, the wily Texan was already at

work, sawing at his bonds with patient care. Before they had gone a hundred yards, he had freed one hand, and very quickly cut the last remains of the cord that confined the other to his belt.

The change of order in the procession brought both the adventurers nearer to their lost weapons.

Both of Gilmore's pistols were stuck in Quahtemoczin's belt, and he carried the long rifle of O'Donnell over his saddle-bow.

Gilmore began to hope for success, wild as the attempt might seem. They had entered on a narrow, winding path, that wound along the side of the precipitous cañon. Below them was a deep, dark, quiet-looking river, without rocks or rapids, to all appearance. About half-way up the cañon, occurred the only disturbance to the otherwise tranquil stream, in the shape of a waterfall, some fifty feet broad, which fell over a hollow, beetling precipice about a hundred feet in height, projecting far out.

Right underneath this fall the path led, emerging at the other side, and then climbing the opposite cliffs.

Gilmore slipped as close to O'Donnell as the path would admit, and cut his bonds without any difficulty.

"Now then, O'Donnell!" he said, in an undertone. "When we get under the fall, you spring on the chief, and I'll grab my pistols. The men in front can't turn, and I can shoot those behind."

O'Donnell made no reply save by a nod. But the quick ear of Quahtemoczin had heard them conversing, and he halted. The path at this place was about eight feet wide, there being room for a horseman to pass another, and no more.

The cacique motioned to Matlasca to go on, and thus brought himself next to the captives. He looked at them suspiciously, but they met his gaze with a stare of such perfect innocence, that Quahtemoczin was satisfied. He motioned to them to halt, and draw up against the side of the precipice, till the rear-guard had passed them. He evidently had determined to have the whole party under his own eye.

When they resumed the march then, Quahtemoczin himself brought up the extreme rear, with his two captives next in front of him, and his daughters in the rear of the procession of warriors.

The cacique thought that he could trust no one to take care of the prisoners but himself.

He little knew that he was falling into their plans of escape, as readily as if he had intended to wink at them.

Harotahche and Itana were trembling with fear and excitement. They had a superstitious awe of their father, and imagined that it was impossible to escape from under his eye.

Matters were in this state, when the foremost Indian rode into the path under the waterfall. For about a hundred yards before this place, and underneath the fall itself, the path was only wide enough for a single horseman, and it was utterly impossible to turn.

The long file of Indians, ambling along in martial order, their bright weapons gleaming in the sun, looked strikingly picturesque and beautiful, as they appeared and disappeared behind the sheet of white foam at the foot of the fall. The noise of the water rumbling and echoing in the hollow cañon, the clatter of hoofs, and the cries of the Navahoes, one to another, were suddenly broken in upon by a sound of a far different character.

The echo of a gun-shot, repeated and magnified into a roar like artillery, filled the whole of the dark gorge.

Quahtemoczin gave a startled shout.

"Forward! Forward!" he cried.

He had no need to give the order. The startled horses in front, unable to turn, followed the example of the first Indian, and scurried on, across the cañon, under the waterfall, and up the opposite side, as hard as they could go, in a regular stampede.

The rapid *bang! bang! bang!* of several muskets from below, whose bullets were skipping from rock to rock, hurried their steps.

Only the two Indian girls held in their frightened animals, who longed to join in the general flurry.

Quahtemoczin kept shouting "Forward!" but they did not seem to understand him.

Where they were, the path was still broad enough to turn, and the cacique, forgetting every thing else in his anxiety, rode forward, to urge Harotahche on.

Before he had time to speak, he was seized and pinioned

from behind, by the gigantic strength of O'Donnell, and Little Gilmore was on the other side of him, pulling out the pistols from his belt.

The chief was so taken by surprise, that he was disarmed almost without resistance, and Gilmore, his eyes flashing ferociously, clapped a pistol to the side of his head, ordering him to surrender.

Quahtemoczin bowed his head ; and O'Donnell pulled him off his horse, without further trouble ; and took from him his own and Gilmore's ammunition-belts.

The Texan then addressed the cacique.

"Great chief," he said, "our God is too great for the gods of the Navahoes. Go in peace. The daughters of Quahtemoczin will see that the white strangers never know of the city of Tlalotla. I have said."

Quahtemoczin turned away, deeply humiliated and chagrined. What he might have said is uncertain, when his eye, roving up the path, suddenly caught sight of the awful form of the devil-grizzly, coming down upon them, and not three hundred yards off.

Without a word, he climbed on his horse, trembling all over with panic fear, and galloped down the path as hard as he could go.

O'Donnell, looking round, perceived the same object, a moment after.

The stout-hearted giant turned pale for a moment, as the tremendous beast loomed up above them.

"Run, girls ! Run, for the love of heaven !" he shouted, catching up his rifle as he spoke.

There was no time for words then.

Harotahche and Itana, yielding to terror for a moment, shrieked aloud, and spurred their horses. The animals, catching the scent of the bear, and as much frightened as any one, galloped off, and were soon on the narrow path that led under the waterfall.

O'Donnell and Gilmore followed at a run, with that instinct of flight that seized them at first.

The shots below convinced them that there were friends near, and they felt as if they needed help badly. They too were soon on the narrow path, quite wide enough for them.

"Go slower, O'Donnell," suddenly cried the Texan. "The beast won't be able to run here. Go slower."

The Irishman instinctively slackened his pace, as the other spoke. They were already within ten yards of the edge of the fall, and could see the narrow way, all glistening with wet, under its sheet, and a broader platform beyond, where the two girls had halted, and were waiting, hesitating and watching.

A man on foot could very easily turn on this ledge, which was not far from three feet in width, but with a horseman it was different.

And with a beast as huge as the devil-grizzly, very different indeed.

Going nearly two feet to their one on the broader path beyond, the great beast had already arrived at the narrow ledge, and was now advancing.

But he was compelled to walk in a very slow and cautious manner. His broad back, and great bulk, threatened every moment to topple him over. He had to sidle along with great care.

"We can't find a better place to fight him than this," said Gilmore, hurriedly; "I've been hunted enough by the brute; I'll not run another step."

O'Donnell grounded the butt of his rifle.

"I'm with ye," was all he said.

Neither of them had thought of looking down yet, to see who had fired those shots that had scared the Indians. They had been too much occupied with the bear. But as the latter, after a few steps forward on the narrow way, appeared to be almost at a stand-still, Gilmore cast his eyes to the river below.

He saw that the fall, by the side of which he stood, after striking the breast of the rock about twenty feet below, boiled up in foam over a slope of rock, for some thirty feet more, ending in a deep, black pool.

Lying in this pool, at the foot of the rocks, was a large boat like a man-of-war's launch, with a dozen men, all told, in her.

Several other men were climbing up the face of a jutting projection of rocks, that promised to bring them out at the rear of the devil-grizzly.

Gilmore shouted to them to go back, but they kept on climbing.

"Put a ball into him, O'Donnell," said the Texan, quietly. "We've got him now, if we never had."

And in truth it seemed so.

O'Donnell raised the heavy rifle to his cheek and squinted through the sights. It was a long shot to take, but he preferred to strike while the iron was hot.

The bullet hit the rock close to the bear's cheek, and knocked some chips in its face, without wounding it.

But so nice was the balance of the bear at that moment, that the involuntary start it gave was enough to disturb it. The devil-grizzly lost his balance for a moment, and slipped half-way over the precipice, clinging desperately with its claws to the edge.

But the ledge was too slippery for him to hold on long. He slipped further and further, and finally went over backward, falling into the deep, black pool below, with a tremendous splash.

Both the adventurers involuntarily burst out laughing at the ludicrous figure cut by the bear; but their merriment was cut short by the reflection that their formidable enemy was by no means dead yet.

In a very few moments he reappeared on the surface of the water, and struck out boldly and desperately for the boat.

The men in the boat caught up their arms, and at once opened fire on the bear, at a few feet distance. But the hurry and confusion was great: the boat rocked from side to side; and the bullets flew wide of the true mark, or only struck the huge beast in spots sufficient to wound and infuriate it, without disabling it.

"They'll let him get off, by Heavens!" muttered Gilmore. "Oh, if one cool hand was only there!"

As he spoke, the head of the bear appeared close to the boat, and before opposition could be attempted, the great beast had placed one paw on the gunwale, and reared himself up over the stern.

There was an immediate stampede, as the monster reached out the other paw, and finally raised himself up, and clambered into the craft.

By the time he was in it, it was otherwise empty, and the whole of the crew was in the water, swimming away to shore in every direction in frantic hurry.

Had the boat been any less in size than it was, the bear would have swamped it. As it was, angry and disappointed in his expectation of prey, he leaped overboard again, and made for the nearest swimmers.

Two of them he overtook and swept out of existence with one blow of his enormous claws. The rest were clambering up the rocks on all sides, laying hold of every little crevice and projection that enabled them to get out of the reach of their terrible antagonist.

The devil-grizzly roared aloud with baffled fury, when he found that he could not climb the wet rocks around, and that his prey was out of his reach. He swam round and round, trying for a landing-place in vain. His huge carcass could find rest nowhere.

At last he turned sulkily around, and swam out of the pool, down the course of the sluggish stream, the victor in the strange contest, under all his disadvantages.

He had been wounded in several places, for all the water was dyed with blood, but he had already killed two men, and was able to exterminate the party, if he had any thing like a fair chance.

"Holy Moses!" ejaculated O'Donnell; "if that ain't the divil himself, on four legs, it's a quare thing. We're all in a pretty pickle now."

"Let us get the girls out of danger before we talk," said Gilmore, hurriedly. "Quahtemoczin may be waiting up above there now, and we're not in the best position for an assault."

He beckoned to the two girls, who rode back to meet their lovers; and the four proceeded to where the first of the climbers had now reached the top of the rocks. He was a regular old-fashioned hunter, in fact our old friend, Billy Wilson.

"Mornin', strangers," commenced that worthy, as quietly as though passing the time of day with a neighbor. "Kinder loose, things has been, round here, I guess. Who are yer? ef it bean't too much to ax."

"We have been prisoners among the Navahoes," said Gilmore, "and we took advantage of your fire to overpower our last guard, and take his arms. That diabolical grizzly bear has haunted us like an evil spirit."

"Lord bless yer, lad," said the hunter, coolly, inserting an immense quid of tobacco in his cheek as he spoke, "that ar' grizzly ain't nothen to grizzlies I *hev* seen. Why, thar was Old Persimmons, we used to call him, he was nigh onto twicet as big, and we shot *him*. He *hev* made a kinder sorter scatterment down thar." He added the last words with a shrewd wink.

"Oh, murder!" ejaculated O'Donnell; "only a scatterment! I tell ye, man, he's the devil himself, and a legion of imps at his back, too, that's what he is!"

The hunter looked up at the gigantic figure beside him with a quizzical grin, as he said.

"Waal, I should think as *you* mout stand a game of fisty-cuffs with him, ef he *is* the devil."

"The Lord forbid!" said O'Donnell, piously. "Didn't I try it once—bad luck to him—and didn't I catch a clout as knocked me flyin', and left me on my back for a month, so it did."

The mountaineer laughed.

"Yer don't look as if it had hurt yer much," he remarked.

"Glory be to God for an iligant constitution! and if I'd only had the laste taste o' whisky, I'd have been up and about next mornin'," said the Fenian.

Billy Wilson laughed again.

"Happy to see you, Mr. Irish," he said. "If ye'll come down to the steamer with me ye shall have all the whisky ye can drink."

"It's a bargain, my jewel," said O'Donnell. Then he added, with his own dry humor: "And how the divil will we get there? Will we fly like the birds? Divil a way else do I see."

"Oh! they'll get the boat righted presently," said the hunter; "if so be as the oars ain't all got floated away. Thur at it now. Ef the darned skunks had had sense to have pulled away from the b'ar, 'twouldn't have happ'ed. Ef I'd be'n aboard, 'twouldn't happ'ed, nuther. Wust of it is, Cap

"I blame me fur them two hummoxes as got keeled up. 'Tain't my fault."

While he was thus muttering and talking, the party below, taking courage in the absence of Bruin, had managed to get into the boat again, and bail it out, while others swam about for the oars, which were most of them floating.

The fugitives, leaving their horses behind them, as useless now, slowly clambered down the sharp rocks to the pool below, and found themselves in safety from the Indians at last.

The strong metal life-boat had not been injured by its unceremonious boarding, beyond shipping a little water, and no arms had been lost, all being left in the boat.

The four fugitives were warmly welcomed on board, and after giving a short outline of their adventures to the sympathizing soldiers, Billy Wilson assumed the command:

"Now, then, boys," he said; "we hev got to git back to the 'Explorer,' down this here river; and in this here river, somewhar, there are a b'ar. Now thur ain't no use in gittin' skeered and shootin' wild, like ye did afore, and got spilt. That ar' grizzly kurn't kim near this 'ere boat, ef we don't want him. We hev six oars of a side, and ef we're durned fools enough to let him git aboard, we ought ter be eaten, every one on us. I know whar that ar' grizzly are. He are on the bar, 'bout a quarter of a mile below hyar, a-waitin' to gain strength fur the long stretch below. *Now we've got to hev that grizzly's skin.* D'YE HEAR?"

A faint cheer was raised, but the men evidently had no relish for the task. They had experienced too lately the tremendous power of their enemy. Billy Wilson saw the state of the case and spoke more forcibly.

"Now, boys, we kurn't stay here forever. We've got to git past that ar' b'ar, and I'll tell ye how to do it. This here Irish gentleman appears to be some on a shoot, and he ar' got a reg'lar old sixty-four pounder with him. Let him and me git in the bow, and shoot the darned brute. The rest on ye row like sixty, and keep ahead of the b'ar. That's all we've got ter do."

The advice was so obviously just and reasonable, that the men took their seats without a murmur.

Yielding to the impulsion of twelve oars—some of them double-manned—the long-boat struck off down the center of Cross Cañon.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DEATH-GRAPPLE.

As the boat went down the center of the cañon, and ran her bow out from the narrow pass at the end of the pool, the whole grandeur of the scene burst on the fugitives' vision. Viewed from above, the cañon was grand. From below it was simply awful.

But their thoughts were not occupied in noting the grand and sublime scenery around them, and the sharp picturesque outlines of the rocks on the shores, as the river wound slowly on, through the bowels of the earth, as it were.

Every fresh turn, they expected to see their terrible enemy, and they watched the water instead of the land.

O'Donnell and Billy Wilson lay in the bow of the boat, their loaded rifles beside them, of much the same pattern. But while the bullet of one resembled a pea, that of the other was as big as a new potato.

So they rowed on, the water quite smooth, and the current very sluggish, the river making frequent turns to right and left. After about a quarter of a mile of this work, Billy suddenly exclaimed:

"Now, boys, be ready when we turn the corner! We'll see him thar."

The next moment the bow of the boat gave a grand sweep to the left, and they entered a broad cathedral-like amphitheater, where the river spread itself out for about a quarter of a mile, over rocky shallows, with a deep, black channel in the center.

"Told ye so! Thar he is!" cried the hunter, pointing to the lower end of the amphitheater.

They could distinctly see there the form of the terrible bear, standing in the shallows, as if resting, before he undertook the

passage of the narrow waters beyond, where the lofty walls frowned so forbiddingly.

"Give me one o' them ar' seven-shooters," said Billy, to the bow oarsman. "Thur good enough to *rile* a b'ar with, thof yer can't depend on 'em."

As he spoke, he raised the weapon he had demanded, and pointed it carefully at the distant bear.

The report echoed like thunder in the broad, solemn amphitheater, and the bullet went skipping over the water to where the grizzly stood.

That it struck, was evident, for the great beast gave a tremendous roar of pain and rage, and turning, came plunging through the shallows on to the boat. The water being about two feet and a half deep, he tripped and stumbled very frequently, and sent a shower of spray in the air, bellowing and snarling as he came.

The men began to look over their shoulders, pale and anxious, and Billy Wilson observed it.

"Don't get skeered, lads," he said; "I tell yer the brute can't catch us. Hyar, turn the bow right round now. We'll git into the stern, so as ye kin *see* what a fool we're a-goin' to make of that 'ere b'ar."

The boat's nose soon turned round, away from the bear, and the rowers, looking astern, could see their dreaded enemy plainly.

Billy Wilson sat in the stern, a seven-shooter on his lap, and his own old-fashioned pea-rifle, on which he depended above any thing modern, lay beside him.

O'Donnell was ready with his own heavy piece, and altogether it seemed likely that the bear might yet repent his temerity.

As soon as the boat was fairly turned round, the hunter again raised the carbine to his shoulder and fired a second shot.

"The durned thing *ar'* good for something," he observed, approvingly, as the grizzly bear halted for a moment, showing that the shot had hurt it somewhere.

When the animal again came on, such fearful fury was imprinted on its countenance that the men at the oars trembled involuntarily.

The devil-grizzly well deserved his name. Every shot fired at him only appeared to irritate him, without any result otherwise. He came straight on through the shallows, and leaped into the deep water within a hundred feet of the boat.

"Pull," said Billy Wilson, very quietly.

The men sprung to their oars with a will, and at the second stroke the boat seemed fairly to fly. The bear, swimming his best, was left behind in a twinkling, as was natural in a twelve-oared boat. The old hunter laughed.

"Wal, boys," he said, "are ye satisfied now? Ef ye want ter run away, ye kin do it; but *I'm* a-goin' to have the pelt of that there grizzly, afore *I've* done."

The men, feeling ashamed of their cowardice, were quite willing to obey orders now; and the boat was allowed to float with the current, till the bear was close behind it. Then, pulling away, and leading the animal in a circle, they were soon in the channel, in the middle of the shallows, and pulling down-stream to the steamer, followed by the bear.

The latter climbed up on the shallows, and came tripping and stumbling after, with considerable rapidity, but the boatmen, stretching to their oars, had no difficulty in heading him, and reached the end of the shallows some yards in advance, the infuriated and disappointed animal plunging into deep water a moment after.

"Rest!" cried old Billy, at this juncture. "We've got him now, boys, as easy as fallin' off a log. Let her float."

The oars were suspended in the air, and the boat still glided on, from its former impetus, the bear within a few feet of the stern.

The quiet, clear voice of Little Gilmore now made itself heard. He had sat perfectly silent till now.

"If one of you gentlemen will lend me a rifle that shoots more than once," he was saying, "I will bet a thousand dollars to five that I put a ball into each of the eyes of that bear before he has time to sink."

The offer was so quaintly made, amid the general excitement, that it caused a laugh. But old Billy Wilson, deeming the feat impossible, and not to be outdone in coolness, put down the rifle that he had just lifted to aim, and answered, quickly:

‘Done! Here’s my pile.’

He immediately hauled out of his pocket a five-dollar gold-piece, and turning to Gilmore, inquired :

“Where’s yer pile, and what’s yer name?”

“I am Little Gilmore,” said the gambler, coolly. “Is my word good for the thousand?”

A strong expression of disgust crossed the features of the hunter.

“Ef you’re Little Gilmore, the money’s gone,” said he. “I wouldn’t ha’ betted ef I’d ‘a’ knowed it. I’ve heern tell of you afore now, from old Pete Wilkins. You kin take my pile.”

“I’ll do it with this pistol,” said Gilmore. “I’ll show you, men, what a very little thing will lay out the biggest beast on the American continent, if you only put the pill *in the right place.*”

He stepped to the stern, and, taking his seat in the stern-sheets, leaned back. The men were pulling slowly.

“Rest!” he ordered, and the oars remained still.

The great bear, with the implacable ferocity peculiar to its race, followed close behind. As the boat lost her way, the animal gained on it rapidly, till the great mastiff-like muzzle was within about a foot of the stern.

The devil-grizzly uttered a ferocious growl, and struggled to rise in the water again to enter the boat.

“Now!” cried the Texan, “two shots and the money’s mine!”

His words mingled with the sharp *crack! crack!* of the little pistol.

Shot straight through each eye into the brain, the huge bear rolled over in the water, in one instant, dead.

“Hurroo for little equality!” shouted O’Donnell, as he added his own share to the dexterity of the deed.

He had been coiling the lasso, taken from Harotahche’s saddle, during the latter part of the chase; and now, in the very nick of time, he cast the noose of the rope over the head of the dead monster, just before it sunk to the bottom, where it would undoubtedly have lain, but for the skill of the Fenian chief.

The carcass was hauled alongside, and towed down the river in triumph; and before long, the captives had the plea-

sure of saluting the stars and stripes once more. They were soon on the deck of the steamer, "Explorer," a diminutive, flat-bottomed craft, built expressly for the exploration of the Colorado.

And right glad were they to come back to civilization once more. The expedition was about to turn back, and in fact did so the very next day. Harotahche and Itana were delighted with the novelty of every thing.

Their voyage down the river was safe and prosperous, unmarked by any untoward incident. After the death of their grim enemy, fortune seemed to have nothing but smiles for them.

They arrived at the mouth of the Colorado in due time, and the old padre at Santa Catalina blessed that union of two very happy couples.

It was a rather roundabout journey to get to San Francisco, but they accomplished it at last, and sold their jewels to immense advantage, among the Chinese diamond-merchants there.

Little Gilmore dropped his gambling courses, as soon as he got married; and, after a stormy life, made a very good husband.

The giant O'Donnell became so ridiculously fond of his beautiful wife that he forgot all about Ireland for a while, and never went near a Fenian meeting.

He kept the skin of the great bear, which Gilmore insisted on his retaining.

"You knocked him into the water in the first place," said the Texan. "It was your shot made him tumble in. And when he was sinking, you fished him out. So that he belongs fairly to you."

"Consider yerself embraced, darlin'," said the giant, laughing. "Harotahche will make a good proxy for me. And more by token, that we'd never have won the love of them beautiful cr'atures, or enjoyed the convenience of marryin' rale princesses, if it hadn't been for that same ould thief
THE DEVIL-GRIZZLY."

THE END.

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